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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE;

OR,

THE SCRIPTURES IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN KNOWLEDGE,

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

AN ENTIRELY NEW EDITION, REVISED THROUGHOUT
AND LARGELY REWRITTEN.

ILLUSTRATED.

VOL. VI.
FROM THE EXILE TO MALACHI,
COMPLETING THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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HOURS WITH THE BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

A VOICE FROM CHEBAR, AGAINST JUDAH.

NOTHING was more fatal to the religious life of the exiles in Chaldæa, or their brethren still left in Judah, than the confident air of some, calling themselves prophets, who held out hopes directly opposed to the warnings of men like Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The result had been a general discredit of the order. It had become a common saying that "The days of trouble are long in coming; all prophecy is deceit."[1] Men who thus misled the community by audacious misrepresentations made in the name of God, needed to be openly assailed, and Ezekiel, therefore, determined thoroughly to expose them. Referring to the proverb so current, he informed his fellow-captives that Jehovah commanded him to address them thus, in His name:

"XII. 23. I will[2] make this proverb cease, so that it will no longer be used in Israel. Say to them: The days (of visitation) and of the fulfilment of every prediction are at hand. 24. For there shall no more be lying vision, or (false) flattering divination, in the House of Israel. 25. But I, Jehovah, will speak, and what I speak will come forthwith to pass; it will be no longer delayed. In your own days, O

[1] **Ezek. xii. 22.** [2] **Ezek. xii. 23-28.**

House of Disobedience, I will both speak and fulfil My word, says the Lord Jehovah!"

Another saying, current everywhere, was not less unworthy. Men sneeringly insinuated that "the visions which Ezekiel[1] saw were for the long future; his prophecies, for distant times." In contradiction to this, they were now told from Jehovah Himself, that none of His words, spoken through real prophets, would fail of present fulfilment. The make-believe prophets, who spoke "according to their own hearts," were next directly attacked.

"XIII. 3. Woe,[2] cried Ezekiel, to the ridiculous mock-prophets, who follow (not Jehovah, but) their own heart, and announce that which they have not seen! 4. O Israel, thy prophets, (thus degenerate, instead of building up the tottering state, have brought it nearer its fall), as foxes (undermine the ruins they infest).[3] 5. Ye have not gone out before the gaps (of the vineyard wall,[4] by night; to defend it, like faithful keepers, from wild beasts), nor have ye built it up and repaired it, before Israel; to help him to stand in the battle, in the day of Jehovah!"

Instead of this, they had promised a happy future, in lying oracles:

"XIII. 6. They say (they have) seen visions, but they were lies, and their divination, also, was lying, when they said, 'Jehovah saith,' though He had sent them no revelations, and (declared) that they might hope to fulfil their words. 7. Is it not true that you have (only)

[1] Literally, "this one." [2] **Ezek. xiii. 3-7.**

[3] Wilton (*Negeb*, p. 138) thinks the jackal is intended: but the word Shual is from Shaal = "to go down into the depth," in allusion to the burrowing of the fox in the earth.

[4] Hebrew, *gadair*. For meaning of *jedar*, see vol. iv. p. 230. The loose wall of dry stones round the vineyard had been undermined by winter storms, for the prophet has changed his figure, but these men have not, like faithful keepers of the vineyard, stood outside the gaps by night, to keep wild beasts from breaking in, nor have they filled them up and strengthened the weak and shaking jedar, to make the vineyard safe. There is also a double use of the figure, by which the repaired wall would serve as a shelter and defence to Israel, on the day of battle, etc.

seen a pretended vision, and that ye have uttered a lying divination, when ye said 'Jehovah saith it,' though I, Jehovah, have *not* spoken?

"8. Therefore,[1] thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because ye have spoken falsehood, and (pretended to) see lies; behold I am against you, says the Lord Jehovah. 9. And My hand will be on the prophets who see falsehood and divine lies. They shall not be the counsellors of My people, nor shall they be inscribed in the Book of the House of Israel, nor come into the land of Israel (at the Return)—that ye may know that I am the Lord Jehovah—10. because they have led astray My people, saying 'All is well,' though all was not well. For (My people, in their foolish dream of security, behind the protection of Egypt, are like) men that have built a wall, and lo, they (the prophets) have daubed it over with white plaster (of lies, and thus made it seem trustworthy). 11. Say to them who have daubed it over with whited plaster (of lies), that it will fall. For a deluge of rain is coming; and ye hailstones, fall ye; thou hurricane, break loose! 12. And, lo, when the wall has fallen, will it not be said to you, 'Where is that plaster (of lies) which you plastered over it?' 13. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, I will let loose a hurricane wind in My fury, and a rain, sweeping all before it, will come in My anger, and great hailstones in My destroying wrath! 14. And I will cast down the wall that you have plastered over, and throw it to the earth, laying bare its very foundation, and it will fall, and you will perish under it, and you will know that I am Jehovah! 15. I will let loose my fury on the wall and on them that plastered it over, and it will be said of you, 'The wall is no more, neither they who plastered it over; 16.—the prophets of Israel, who prophesy visions of peace to her, though there is no peace,' saith the Lord Jehovah!"

But lying prophets were not the only enemies with whom their faithful brethren had to contend. While these deceived the people as a whole, false prophetesses misled individuals, and snared souls by unholy arts, promising life and prosperity where God had denounced death. They, therefore, are next assailed.

"17. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, who prophesy out of their own heart, (for gain, and with

[1] **Ezek. xiii. 8-17.**

heathen spells). Prophesy thou against them, 18. and say,[1] Thus says the Lord Jehovah : Woe to the women that sew together magic ornaments for every joint of the hand,[2] and make magic coverings for the heads of persons of every age, to snare their souls.[3] Will you thus hunt down the souls of My people, to preserve your own souls alive ; 19. dishonouring Me before My people, for handfuls of barley and for bits of bread, (for your maintenance); slaying souls which should not *die*, and keeping yours alive which should not *live*[4]—by lying to (those of) My people who listen to your falsehoods ?

"20. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against your magic knots and bands, by which ye snare souls (as if they were prey to make fly into (your nets); and I will tear them from your arms, and will set the souls free—the souls that ye hunt as if they were prey to make fly into your nets.[5] 21. And I will tear off your magic mantles and head coverings, and deliver My people out of your hand, that they may no longer be in your hand to be hunted down; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah ! 22. Because ye have falsely made sad the heart of the righteous, though *I* have not made him sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not

[1] **Ezek. xiii. 18-22.**

[2] In verse 20 they are said to be on the *arms*.

[3] De Wette and Ewald seem to have hit on the most reasonable explanation of this passage Smend agreeing with them. De Wette fancies magic bands and fillets are meant. Ewald thinks the magic ornaments were mirrors (very probably small in size), which these female dabblers in the black arts carried, as he supposes, on their arms or in their hands, as other women carried their ordinary mirrors. Ewald, *Die Propheten*, vol. ii. p. 261. Rosenmüller has anticipated this solution in his wonderful Scholia. Some, says he, think the words refer to the magic rites of these women—by which, through placing such ornaments or things (whatever they were) on the person of those consulting them, they wished to make them more fitted to receive their divinations. Theodoret supposes pillows are mentioned as a figure for smooth and seductive discourse ; soft pillows inducing quiet and ease, and soft words, though false, pleasing and soothing in a similar way, while instilling every kind of perversion into the mind.

[4] Smend has, "preserved the souls of others alive"—destroying the godly by the terror of their rites, and keeping alive the godless, their supporters. But this seems far-fetched. De Wette says, "preserving alive the souls who belong to you." Rabbi Dr. Arnheim says, "that you may preserve your own life." Rosenmüller paraphrases the verse thus, "Shall I at all permit that you should destroy My people, by your laying on them your lying oracles, predicting all misfortunes and evils to them, while you cheer your own kind by promising them every happiness ? The end will be different from what you think ; good fortune will not come to the ungodly, as you say, but every evil will light on you and those who listen to you." *Ezechiel, in loc.*, vol. i. p. 355.

[5] De Wette renders it, "to make them fly to you."

turn from his wicked way, so as to save his life—23. therefore you shall no more have lying visions, nor speak any more false divinations, for I will deliver My people out of your hand; and ye shall know I am Jehovah!"

If, however, it was imperative to denounce those who thus led the people astray, it was no less so to expose the sins of the people themselves, which made them an easy prey. Advice and consolation were sought from the true prophets, but there was still a hankering in the depth of the hearts of most, after their old corruptions, the high places and their idols; many of them, indeed, as is seen from the Babylonian tablets, giving themselves up to the local idolatry, and identifying themselves with the Chaldæans. Their homage to the prophet was thus only outward and worthless. But such hypocrisy was utterly hateful to Jehovah, and entailed on those guilty of it, His severest indignation. To root it from the bosoms of the people, He threatened to visit them with the sternest punishments. Thus alone could His ancient relation to Israel be restored. The enforcing these truths was now the task of Ezekiel, and an occasion soon presented itself. Taking advantage of a visit from some elders of the people, he thus addressed the community through them. He had been warned by the "word of Jehovah," of their secret leaning to heathenism. "Son of man,"[1] it had said, "these men cherish their loathsome gods[2] in their hearts, and set before their eyes (as the object of their worship) the images which are the stumbling block that causes their iniquity. Should I be inquired of at all by such as they?" He was therefore told to say to them:

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 1-5.**
[2] "Loathsome," literally, "filth-gods," and so throughout.

"XIV. 4. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] Every man of the house of Israel that cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets before his eyes the idols which are the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I, Jehovah, will answer him as he deserves, (with the punishment due) for his multitude of loathsome gods; 5. that I may visit home the heart sins of the house of Israel,[2] because they are all alienated from Me through their loathsome gods.

"6. Therefore, say to the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord Jehovah. Repent and turn back from your loathsome gods, and turn your faces from all idols, abominations as they are! 7. For every one of the house of Israel, and of the foreigners sojourning in Israel, who separates himself from Me, and cherishes his loathsome gods in his heart, and sets up before his eyes the stumbling block which causes his iniquity, and yet comes to a prophet, to ask him to inquire of Me on his behalf, I, Jehovah, Myself will answer him. 8. And I will set My face against that man, and make him a sign and a proverb, and cut him off from the midst of My people; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

"9. As to the prophet who lets himself be enticed, and then speaks a Word (for his own ends, as if from Me): I, Jehovah, who know the heart, will not hinder him that he should not be persuaded.[3] And I will stretch out My hand against him, and destroy him from the midst of My people Israel. 10. They will (each) bear the punishment of his iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as that of him who has inquired of Me through him; 11. that the house of Israel may no more go astray from Me, or pollute themselves any more by all the misdeeds (of such offenders), but be My people, and I their God, saith the Lord Jehovah!"

The affairs of Jerusalem seem to have been almost as well known among the exiles as in Judæa. In spite of all warnings, the Egyptian party was gradually forcing the weak Zedekiah into a league with the Pharaoh, which involved the breach of his solemn oath "by God," to be a true vassal of the Chaldæan king. Such faithlessness, Ezekiel felt, was certain to bring down the severest punishments on the land. Like all the ancient Hebrews, he

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 4-11.** [2] Literally, "take them in their heart."
[3] Eichhorn.

firmly believed in temporal rewards for godliness, and penalties for sin. It was, however, a difficulty with many, that he should have predicted the escape of some of the idolatrous people of Jerusalem, from the judgments impending on their fellows. He therefore shews them that, while the fear of God preserves alive the worthy, as seen in the cases of Noah, Daniel, and Job, the land that sins must suffer. Nor was the fact that some of the ungodly of Jerusalem would be spared, any contradiction to this, for they were preserved only to vindicate God's righteousness, by letting the heathen see their vileness, and thus recognize the justice of the Divine judgments inflicted on their city. The Word of Jehovah, says he, came again to me, saying:

"XIV. 13. Son of man,[1] when a land sins against Me by gross unfaithfulness,[2] and I stretch out My hand against it, and break the staff of its bread, and send on it Famine, and cut off man and beast from it: 14. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel,[3] and Job were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord Jehovah. 15. If I let Wild Beasts come into a land, and they bereave it (of its children), so that it become such a desert that no one can pass through it any more, because of these beasts: 16. though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they (themselves), only, would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 17. Or, should I bring War on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through that land,' and should cut off man and beast from it: 18. though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they, themselves, only would be saved! 19. Or, if I send Pestilence into that land, and pour out My fury upon it in blood, cutting off from it man and beast: 20. were even Noah, Daniel, and Job in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they would save neither son nor daughter, they would save their own lives only, by their righteousness.

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 13-20.**

[2] Ewald thinks the breach of the oath by Zedekiah is referred to.

[3] Daniel was at the time a captive in Babylonia. The inversion of names may rise from the fact of the case of Job seeming like a climax. See Heb. xi. 32.

"21. Now, says the Lord Jehovah;[1] How much more (will this be the case) when I send My four sore judgments on Jerusalem—the Sword, Famine, Wild Beasts, and Pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? 22. Yet, behold, a few shall be spared in it, and led away captives, both men and women, and they will be brought among you,[2] that you may see their way and their doings, and be comforted concerning the evil I have brought on Jerusalem, and all I have done against it. 23. For they will satisfy your minds (respecting Me), when you see their ways and their doings, and you will know that I have not done without cause, all that I have done in it, says the Lord Jehovah!"

Another fragment of Ezekiel's utterances in these years strikes keenly at the self-complacency of his brethren, and must have galled their pride. They boasted of being the noble vine planted in Canaan by God. Prophets had often compared them to one,[3] though they had spoken also of its having degenerated and grown rank and useless. But in the present case the worthlessness of the wood of the vine, so much softer and more crooked than many other kinds, is the only point brought forward. They might, indeed, be a vine, but, now that they bore no fruit, of what worth was their wood? The Word of Jehovah, he says, came to him, saying:

"XV. 2. Son of man, what better is the wood of the vine than other kinds of wood? Or what is the vine-branch among the trees of the yaar?[4] 3. Can you take wood from it, to make into anything? or do they take even a pin from it, to hang any vessel upon? 4. See, it is given for food to the fire! The flame has burnt off its two ends, and scorched the middle.[5] Is it good for anything? 5. Even when it was whole, it was good for nothing; how much less will it be good for anything when the fire has burnt and scorched it!

"6. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will make the inhabi-

[1] **Ezek. xiv. 21-xv. 6.**
[2] In Babylon, among the exiles.
[3] Hos. x. 1. Isa. v. 1. Jer. ii. 21.
[4] See vol. iv. p. 369.
[5] Is this an allusion to the calamities already endured by the Twelve Tribes?

tants of Jerusalem like the wood of the vine, which I have given, like that of the other trees of the yaar, as food for the fire. 7. I will set My face against them.[1] They came out of the fire, (when I brought them from Egypt,) and fire will now finally consume them, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I set My face against them, 8. and make the land desolate, because they have committed unfaithfulness! saith the Lord Jehovah."

Ceaseless in his endeavours to rouse his fellow-countrymen to a sense of their true position, as apostates, to a lamentable extent, from the religion of their fathers, and as morally degenerate and corrupt, Ezekiel tried every style of address in turn. An allegory, long and minute, was his next attempt to influence them for good. Jerusalem is personified as a new-born female child, exposed at her birth, but graciously taken under His protection by Jehovah, and ultimately united with Him in a marriage contract, and tenderly cared for. Her conduct, however, is ungrateful and wicked in the extreme, so that, in the end, He has to threaten her with the severest punishment for her unfaithfulness, which is shewn to have been greater than that of the worst of her neighbours.

The Word of Jehovah, he says, came to him, directing him to "cause Jerusalem to know her abominations," and this he does as follows.

"XVI. 3. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to Jerusalem: Thy origin and birth were of the land of the Canaanites; thy father was an Amorite[2] and thy mother a Hittite; (for when taken by David thou wast

[1] **Ezek. xv. 7-8; xvi. 3.**

[2] The Amorites, as we know them, from the paintings of the chief men of Kadesh-of-the-Amorites, at Karnak, were of a white complexion, with light red-brown hair and eyes, or of a pinkish flesh colour, as in other paintings; quite distinct from the red of the Egyptians, the brown of the Hittites, or the yellow of the Maghrabis. They (the Amorites) were a race of fair people, allied to the populations of the Ægean, and were probably Aryan. Flinders Petrie, in *Bab. and Orient. Record.*, ii. 136.

a Jebusite city—Amorites and Hittites forming a large part of thy population). 4. In the day of thy birth thou wast not cared for;[1] thou wast not washed with water, to cleanse thee, nor rubbed with salt,[2] nor wrapped in swaddling bands. 5. No eye pitied thee, to do any of these things for thee, or had compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out, and exposed on the open field, on the day of thy birth; so much wast thou loathed."

This refers, by a change of allusion, to the wretched condition of Israel in Egypt. But Jehovah had pity upon the helpless outcast.

"6. Then went I (Jehovah) by thee, and saw thee lying[3] in thy blood, and said to thee—'All wretched[4] as thou art, live;' yes, I said to thee, 'All wretched as thou art, live.' 7. Ten thousand-fold increase, like that of the shoots of the field, I gave thee, and thou didst multiply, and wax great, and thou camest to have beauty of cheeks, and thy bosom became womanly, and thy hair grew long, though once thou hadst been naked and bare. 8. And as I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, lo, thou wast at the age to love; and I swore (fidelity) to you, and made thee my spouse by covenant,[5] and took thee under my protection, throwing as it were My mantle over (thee, as sign that I did so),[6] saith the Lord Jehovah, and thou becamest Mine. 9. Then I washed thee with water, and cleansed thee from all the shame of the past, and anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee with broidered work of many colours, and shod thee with sandals of seal leather,[7] and wound a girdle of the finest linen round thee, and hung on thee a silken veil,[8] to thy feet. 11. I decked thee with ornaments; I put bracelets on thy wrists, and a gold chain round thy neck.

[1] I paraphrase the clause of the original. **Ezek. xvi. 4-11.**

[2] Infants were rubbed with salt, in the idea that it hardened the skin. To this day this is done to every new-born infant in Palestine, before it is wrapped round with swaddling clothes—that is, plain bands of calico about six inches wide, by three yards in length.

[3] Sprawling. Henderson.

[4] Literally, "bloody."

[5] Under Moses and Joshua, especially at Sinai.

[6] Ruth iii. 9.

[7] Literally, "Tahash leather." See vol. ii. pp. 137, 327.

[8] It is not quite certain that the Hebrews knew of silk in Ezekiel's day. But see Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, s. v. Meshi. Jerome calls it "a garment so fine as to seem equal to the finest hair." See also Movers, vol. ii. pp. 3, 363.

12. I hung a ring on thy nose, and ear-rings on thine ears, and set a fair coronet on thy brow.[1] 13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, and thy raiment was of the finest linen, and silk, and many-coloured embroidery, and thou atest the finest bread, and honey, and oil; and thou wast indeed passing fair, and didst come to be a queen,[2] 14. and thy fame went forth among the nations, for thy beauty, which was perfect, through the splendour in which I had arrayed thee, saith the Lord Jehovah!"



SANDALS.

But, though thus divinely favoured, Israel had been unfaithful to God. Following the example of Hosea, Ezekiel represents this by the figure of conjugal infidelity. All alliances with heathen nations had been thus denounced by the earlier prophet, but the special guilt of Ezekiel's day was the idolatrous worship that had prevailed since the time of Manasseh, involving even human sacrifice. Interrupted, in a measure, during Josiah's reign, it had broken out afresh after his death.

"15. But thou didst trust to thy beauty, and thy fame seduced thee to lewdness, and thou gavest thyself up to uncleanness with every passer by, and becamest his![3] 16. Thou didst take thy robes and made many-coloured Asherah tents with them, and committedst impurity under them; a thing that should never have happened.[4]

[1] **Ezek. xvi. 12-16.** [2] Literally, "kingdom."

[3] Thou didst coquet with every form of idolatry.

[4] Text apparently corrupt. Ewald translates the clause, "O shame and disgrace!" In connection with "Asherah tents," it may be noted that Erech, the modern Warka, was the city specially consecrated to the goddess of love, and from which her

"17. Thou didst also take thy ornaments, of My gold and silver that I had given thee, and making them into images of men,[1] committedst impurity with these. 18. And thou tookedst thy many-coloured robes and arrayed the idols in them, and didst set My oil and incense before them. 19. Thou didst, further, set before them, for a sweet savour, My bread that I had given thee;[2] fine flour, and oil, and honey with which I fed thee, saith the Lord Jehovah!

"20. Still worse, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hadst borne to Me, and didst offer them to thy idols, to be destroyed (in their honour). Were thy other sins so small 21. that thou shouldst also slay My sons, and give them up to pass through the fire, for these idols? 22. And, amidst all thy abominations and lewdness, thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and lay, cast out, in thy defilement.[3] 23. But after thou hadst committed all these iniquities, Woe, woe, to thee! saith the Lord Jehovah, 24. thou hast also built a canopy for an altar, and made a high place, in every street.[4] 25. At every meeting of the roads thou didst build thy high places, and didst dishonour to thy beauty, and disgraced thyself before all, and multiplied thy idolatry."

The introduction of Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian heathenism was notorious.

"26. Thou hast also borrowed idolatry from the Egyptians, thy neighbours, foul in their heathenism,[5] and hast increased thy sins, to provoke Me to anger. 27. And, behold, in consequence of this, I stretched out My hand against thee, and diminished thy allotted food-supply, and gave thee over to the will of thy enemies, the laughters of

worship spread. Erech, we are told, in the story of the plague demon Nerra, was the seat of Anu and Istar, the city of the choirs of the festival girls and consecrated maidens of Istar, and, also, of the priest of the goddess and of the festival makers who had devoted their manhood, that men might adore the goddess; carrying swords, razors, stout dresses, and flint knives, and ministering to create reverence for the glory of Istar. Erech was not of Semitic foundation. Its Akkadian name was Unuck, and, if this Unuck can be identified with the Enoch of Genesis, it was the city built by Cain, in commemoration of his first-born son, and must be regarded as having received its earliest culture from Eridu, since Enoch was the son of Jared, according to Genesis v. 18, and Jared, or Irad (Gen. iv. 18), is the same word as Eridu. Sayce.

[1] The idols were of human shape, for the most part. **Ezek. xvi. 17-27.**

[2] Lev. xxi. 6.

[3] Literally, "blood."

[4] Isa. lvii. 7.

[5] Literally, "great of flesh."

the Philistines, who (heathen as they are) blushed at thy sins. 28. Thou didst sin also with the Assyrians,[1] still craving more idols ; thou didst copy their heathenism also, and still thou wast not satisfied. 29. Thou didst therefore, further, increase thy idolatry by adopting that of Chaldæa—the land of traders, and, even then, thou wast not satisfied."

The prophet now breaks out into irony. Israel, he says, is different from others. They may act for reward ; she has been urged only by love of her sins.

"30. How weak is thy heart! saith the Lord Jehovah, that thou doest all this, like a vile woman who is her own mistress, with none to check her! 31. that thou buildest the canopy for thy altars at every meeting of the roads, and raisest thy high place in every street; and yet thou wast not like a harlot, since thou hast not sought pay! 32. O thou adulterous wife, who takest up with strangers, instead of keeping to thy husband! 33. A price is given to every harlot, but thou, instead, hast bestowed thy gifts on all thy lovers, and hast hired them to come to thee from all parts, to commit wickedness with thee.[2] 34. Thou hast been the opposite of other women in thy sins; thou hast not been gone after, but thyself hast gone after thy lovers; thou hast given pay, not gotten it; thou art, indeed, different from others!"

The husband, thus outraged beyond example, cannot, after all this, allow his faithless partner to escape the punishment she has deserved, but must insist, on many grounds, that the severest penalties be inflicted. Those with whom she had sinned are to be the instruments of her shameful and terrible sentence. She must be put to a disgraceful death, as the law demands.

"35. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of Jehovah. 36. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, because thy sin was poured out, and thy shame revealed, by thy idolatries with the religions thou lovedst, and with all thy abominable disgusting gods, and by the blood of thy children

[1] **Ezek. xvi. 28-36.**
[2] A thrust at their sending after foreign idolatries.

which thou gavest to them ; 37. Behold, therefore,[1] I will gather all who have seduced thee from Me, thy God, and those whom thou hast sought to please, and all whom thou hast loved, with all, also, whom thou hast hated ; I will gather them round thee, and disclose thy sin to them, that they may see all thy guilt. 38. And I will judge thee as women are judged who break wedlock and shed blood, and I will shed thy blood, in My fury and jealousy. 39. I will give thee, also, into their hand, and they will throw down thy canopies, and break down thy high places ; they will strip thee of thy robes; take away thy fine ornaments, and leave thee, once more, naked and bare, as I found thee! 40. They will, further, bring up a multitude against thee, and stone thee with stones, and hew thee in pieces with their swords. 41. And they will burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments in thee, before the eyes of many women,[2] and I will make thee cease from playing the harlot, and thou shalt give no more unholy hire. 42. Thus will I cool My fury on thee, and My jealousy, which thou hast excited, will turn from thee, fully avenged, and I will have peace, and be no more angry. 43. Because thou hast forgotten the days of thy youth, and stirred up My indignation by all thy doings, behold, I will let the punishment of thy conduct rest on thy head, saith the Lord Jehovah. Thou wilt not be able to increase thy offences by any new deed of shame."

Jerusalem is, in fact, really a heathen city. Canaan may be called its father and mother ; Samaria and Sodom its sisters. In its desperate ungodliness it has even transcended these guiltiest of cities, and must think of this when it suffers a fate as terrible as theirs.

"44. Behold, every proverb-monger will repeat this saying against thee: 'As is the mother, so is the daughter!' 45. Thou art the (true) daughter of thy mother, who dishonoured her husband and her children: and thou art the (true) sister of thy sisters, who dishonoured their husbands and their children;[3] thy mother was a Hittite and thy father an Amorite.[4] 46. Thy elder sister is Samaria, with her daugh-

[1] **Ezek. xvi. 37-46.** [2] Other nations.

[3] The Canaanites and Samaria and Sodom alike turned from God and gave up their children as sacrifices to idols.

[4] Jerusalem has shewn itself to be in respect to religion a true child of the Canaanites.

ters (the villages round her), who dwell north from thee: thy younger sister, who lives south from thee, is Sodom and her daughters (the towns connected with her). 47. Yet thou hast not contented thyself with walking in their ways,[1] nor in copying their abominations; that was too little for thee to do: thou hast shewn thyself still more corrupt than they, in all thy ways! 48. As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, Sodom, thy sister, and her daughters, have not done as thou and thy daughters (the towns of Judah) have done! 49. Behold, the sin of thy sister Sodom was this—pride, through fulness of bread and undisturbed security, marked her and her daughters, and she did not help the poor and needy.[2] 50. They were haughty, and committed abomination before Me; therefore I put them away, as thou hast seen.

"51. Neither has Samaria committed half of thy sins. Thou hast multiplied thy abominations above hers, and hast made her and her daughters appear righteous, through the excess of abominations thou hast committed. 52. Bear, then, thy shame, thou who hast condemned thy sisters,[3] though thine own greater sins, which made thee an abomination, make them seem righteous in comparison! Blush, and bear thy shame, because, by thy greater sins, thou hast made thy sisters (with all their guilt), appear righteous!"

Since, thus, Samaria and Sodom were comparatively less guilty than Jerusalem, there is still hope even for them—that is, for the heathen, of whom they are made the representatives. Jerusalem will be restored, but her return to favour will follow that of the nations she has been wont to despise. In this also she must be utterly humbled.

"53. And I will bring back again their banished ones to their homes —the banished ones of Sodom and her daughters, and the banished ones of Samaria and her daughters—and then I will bring back again thy banished ones also, in the midst of them—54. that thou mayest bear thine own disgrace, and be ashamed for all that thou hast done, by the consolation thou givest them (when they see thee also punished for thy

[1] **Ezek. xvi. 47-54.** [2] Literally, "take hold of the hand of."

[3] Eichhorn translates this difficult clause "Bear thou the shame which thou thoughtest well deserved by thy sisters," and thinks it is an allusion to the carrying off the inhabitants of Samaria and of the east of the Jordan by Tiglath Pileser.

sins, and find themselves restored through thy means). 55. Thy sisters,[1] Sodom and her daughters, will return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters will return to theirs, and thou and thy daughters will return to theirs. 56. Yet thy sister Sodom's name was not heard in thy mouth in the day of thy pride, 57. before thine own wickedness was made known (and thou didst despise her), as, at the time of the (Syrian) oppression, thou thyself wast the reproach of the daughters of Syria, and of all the nations round, who despised thee on every side—the daughters of the Philistines (doing so especially).[2]

"58. But (now) thou must bear (the punishment of) thy lewdness and (of) thine abominations, saith Jehovah! 59. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will do with thee as thou hast done (to Me). Because thou hast despised the (solemn) oath (taken by thee), breaking the covenant (thou hadst made with Me:[3] I, now, hold My covenant made with thee as broken)!"

But God will not cast off His people for ever. He will hereafter make a new, everlasting covenant with them. Jerusalem shall once more be the head of the new theocracy, into which Sodom and Samaria will be received; but this glorious restoration will be due solely to the sovereign favour of God, and thus, as bounty to the undeserving, will call forth humiliation at the remembrance of the guilty past.

"60. Yet I will (hereafter) remember My (old) covenant with thee, in the days of thy youth, and I will establish with thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then wilt thou think of thy (former) ways and be ashamed, when thou takest to thee thy sisters—the elder and the younger,[4] whom I will give thee for daughters, though (thou hast no

[1] **Ezek. xvi. 55-61.**

[2] This is Smend's idea of the meaning of this passage. Ewald refers it to the then present position of Judah. But though the Syrian kingdom of Chaldæa (as it might be called) was against it, the Philistines had long been crushed. Eichhorn thinks it alludes to the oppression of Assyria, which at the time held Philistia also. But Smend's idea seems best. The Philistines were still very troublesome in the time of the distinctively Syrian war, before the fall of Samaria.

[3] Ezek. xvi. 8.

[4] Sodom and Samaria.

claim to them) by thy covenant.[1] 62. And I will establish My covenant with thee,[2] and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah; 63. that thou mayest ponder, and be humiliated, and never more open thy mouth, because of thy shame, when I forgive thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord Jehovah!"

Another utterance of Ezekiel, of this time, returns to the special and crowning sin, which was bringing down the last calamities on Judah—the faithlessness of Zedekiah to his treaty with Nebuchadnezzar. His threatened revolt was clearly self-destruction. He might enjoy a quiet, though inglorious reign, by keeping his oath. To rise against Chaldæa meant ruin, not only to himself, but to the kingdom. Nor was it treacherous only. To break an oath made "by Elohim," his God, was a high offence against the Divine Majesty, and must bring down bitter punishment, and shocked even the Chaldæan king.

The prophet begins in figurative language, but lays it aside as he goes on.

"XVII. 1. The word of Jehovah came to me, saying: 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable to the house of Israel, 3. and say: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, The great eagle[3] with huge wings of vast spread, full of feathers of different colours, came to Lebanon, and took off the topmost branch of a cedar.[4] 4. He plucked away the highest of its twigs,[5] and took it to the Land of Traders,[6] and set it in the city of business men.[7] 5. He took also a vine of the plants of the land,[8] and set it in a fruitful field;[9] a shoot beside abundant waters, planting it near them, like a willow. 6. And it sprouted and became a trailing vine of low growth, and its branches twined themselves towards the eagle, and its roots were under him. So it became a vine-stock, and gave off runners, and shot forth tendrils.

[1] "Or, though they be not of the covenant."
[2] Ezek. xvi. 62-xvii. 6.
[3] Nebuchadnezzar.
[4] Judah. Jehoiachin was the topmost bough or twig.
[5] Its chief men who were made captives.
[6] Chaldæa.
[7] Babylon. This refers to Jehoiachin's captivity.
[8] Zedekiah.
[9] Judah.

"7. And there was another great eagle,[1] with huge wings and many feathers,[2] and, behold, the vine began to bend its roots and shoot out its branches towards him, from the beds on which it was planted, that he might water it and the ground in which it was planted. 8. It was set in good soil, beside abundant waters, to shoot out runners, and bear fruit, and become a goodly vine.

"9. Say thou—Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Will it thrive? Shall he (Nebuchadnezzar) not tear up its roots and strip off its fruit, so that it will wither; all its shooting leaves drying up, so that no great power or strong army will be needed to pluck it up from the very root? 10. Look there! this newly-set plant—will it thrive? Will it not, if the scorching east wind[3] touch it, wither up wholly?

"Will it not wither away in the beds in which it grows?"

Another Word that came to Ezekiel on the same subject runs as follows:

"12. Say now to the House of Disobedience: Know ye not what these things mean? Say: Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took away its king[4] and its princes, and brought them, to himself, to Babylon. 13. He further took a man of the king's blood,[5] and made a covenant with him, and took an oath of him. He carried away, also, the mighty of the land, 14. that it might be weakened, and not rebel, but keep its covenant and stand. 15. But the man revolted, sending ambassadors to Egypt, to ask that it might give him cavalry and a strong army. Shall he prosper (in his treachery)? Will he escape that acts thus? Shall he break his covenant and yet escape? 16. As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, he shall certainly die (a prisoner) in the midst of Babylon, where the king lives who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he broke. 17. And Pharaoh will do nothing for him in the war, and will send no great army, or mighty host to fight for him, (as he has promised), when the mounts are thrown up and battering rams are raised against Jerusalem, to slay many! 18. Zedekiah has despised his oath, and broken his bond, when, lo, he had given his hand (for it), and having done all this, he shall not escape! 19. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah,

[1] **Ezek. xvii. 7-19.**
[2] Pharaoh Hophra. The Egyptian alliance is here referred to.
[3] The Chaldæans. For the east wind, or sirocco, see vol. v. p. 348.
[4] Jehoiachin. [5] Zedekiah.

as I live, I will surely repay [1] on his own head My oath that he has despised, and My covenant that he has broken. 20. And I will spread My net over him, and he shall be taken in My snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and reckon [2] with him there for his treachery that he has committed against Me. 21. And all his chosen ones, and all his forces, shall fall by the sword, and those who escape shall be scattered to every wind, and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken."

But though God will thus bring on Zedekiah and Judah the punishment of their revolt against Chaldæa, as a sin against His own Majesty—the oath by Him having been dishonoured—He will, hereafter, restore the kingdom of David, and all men will see that, though He seemed to have stood aloof, and to have left Israel without His care, He has, through all the incidents of its bitter experience, been guiding the course of things so as to bring about its final prosperity.

"22. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will further take of the highest branch [3] of the cedar, and will plant it: from the highest of its young shoots I will pluck off a tender one, and plant it on a high and lofty mountain.[4] 23. In the lofty mountain of Israel will I plant it, and it will send forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a noble cedar, and all birds of every kind will dwell under it; in the shadow of its branches will they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field [5] shall know that it was I, Jehovah, who have brought low the high tree and exalted the humble one,[6] and have made the withered tree to flourish again. I, Jehovah, have spoken and will do it."

[1] Literally, "lay." [2] Plead. **Ezek. xvii. 20-24.**

[3] "Foliage," Mühlau und Volck. The royal house of David is meant the Messiah so long expected being especially referred to.

[4] Zion. [5] The heathen nations.

[6] The high tree is Zedekiah, and includes also Jehoiachin. The humble tree is the now crushed, but then, once more exalted, Judah.

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CHAPTER II.

THE CRISIS AS IT APPEARED TO EZEKIEL.

The great question of the Divine relations to man's conduct in this life had long been the subject of agitating discussion and reflection, since social and national trouble had darkened the life of Judah. Asaph had recorded his perplexities regarding it in his famous psalm,[1] and others had followed in the same strain. The Book of Job embodied the difficulties that clouded pious minds, and gave the true solution, but to the mass of men the problem was still dark and anxious. Among the multitude, alike in Judah and on the Chebar, the ways of Providence were bitterly arraigned as unjust. The present generation, they maintained, though not so guilty as others before it, were punished, while their fathers had escaped. "The fathers," they said, in a sententious way, "ate sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."[2] Nor were specious arguments wanting to support this self-righteous commentary on the experience of the nation, in these, its last

[1] Psalm lxxiii. Ewald assigns it to the Persian time; Olshausen, to the Maccabean days. Cheyne assigns it to the close of the Persian, or the beginning of the Greek period. There are twelve psalms inscribed as composed by Asaph, but it is certain that some of them, at least, are later than the time of David's Asaph. They may bear the name from having been composed by later members of the famous clan bearing his name. It was famous even after the Return.

[2] Literally, "blunted, dulled." Unripe grapes are still much eaten in Syria, with the result that a sensation of discomfort in the teeth always follows for a short time. Delitzsch, *Hiob*, xv. 33. Prov. x. 26. In Hor., *Od.*, III. vi. 1, the same sentiment is expressed.

years. The godly Josiah had died in his early prime, and Zedekiah, who was sinking amidst the ruin of his country, had characteristics that drew forth the sympathy of even such men as Jeremiah.[1] The prophets, moreover, often spoke of the Divine judgments impending, as the results of the conduct of Manasseh,[2] and the threats of other parts of Scripture to visit the punishment of sin on the third and fourth generation, seemed to be exactly fulfilled on Josiah and his sons—the grandson and great-grandsons of the wicked king.[3] Nor was this confined to individuals. The people at large appeared as if doomed to suffer for the sins of their ancestors. Josiah's Reformation, it might be said, had brought no blessing, since public misfortune dated from his reign. The doctrine of hereditary punishment for ancestral guilt, had sprung from a misconception of some verses of Scripture, and was at once old and popular.[4] A wider study of the sacred books would, indeed, have led to juster views,[5] but men were too wretched to think calmly; too bitter to weigh their words. Like us all, they were glad to blame others rather than themselves, and to take the air of being treated unjustly.

It was of great moment, for the vindication of the eternal justice of God, that such thoughts, whether honest or affected, should be challenged, and the great lesson enforced that men were, in reality, responsible only for their own sins. This Ezekiel did in the next fragment of his preaching that remains to us.

[1] Jer. xxxviii.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 26; xxiv. 3. Jer. xv. 4; xxxii. 18. Lam. v. 7.

[3] Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7. Lev. xxvi. 39. Num. xiv. 18-33. Deut. v. 9. Isa. xiv. 21; lxv. 7. Jer. ii. 9.

[4] Gen. ix. 25. 2 Sam. xxi. Ps. cix. 14. Job xxi. 19. Matt. xxvii. 25. John ix. 2. Jer. xviii. 19.

[5] 2 Kings xiv. 6. Deut. xxiv. 16.

"XVIII. 1. The word of Jehovah[1] came to me again, saying: 2. What do you mean by this proverb in the Land of Israel: 'The fathers ate sour grapes and the teeth of the sons are set on edge'? 3. As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not use this proverb any more in Israel. 4. For all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so that of the son, is Mine. The soul that sins, *it* will die!

"5. But if a man be just, and do what is lawful and right; 6. if he have not eaten (heathen sacrifices on the high places) on the hills, nor lifted up his eyes (in worship) to the loathsome gods of the house of Israel, nor defiled his neighbour's wife, nor approached an unclean woman, 7. nor oppressed any one; if he have returned to the (poor) debtor the pledge (given by him);[2] if he has taken goods from no one by fraud and injustice,[3] if he has given his bread to the hungry, and covered the naked with clothing; 8. if he has not lent on usury,[4] or taken interest;[5] if he has kept back his hand from iniquity, and has given honest judgment between man and man (in their disputes); 9. if he has walked in My laws and kept My commands, acting truly in all things—he is just; he will surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah!

"10. If, however, such a man beget a son who turns a robber, or a shedder of blood, or does any one of the sins I have named, 11. and does none of the duties I have recited, but has, instead, eaten (idol-meats at the high places) on the hills, defiled his neighbour's wife, 12. oppressed the poor and needy, taken away men's goods by fraud or injustice, lifted up his eyes (in worship) to the loathsome gods, committed abomination, 13. lent money on usury, and taken interest; shall he, then, live? He shall not live! He has committed all these abominations. To death with him! His blood lies on himself!

"14. But if this ungodly son beget a son who sees all his father's sins which he has done; (sees them), and keeps from doing them; 15. if he has not eaten (idol-meats at the high places) on the hills, nor lifted up his eyes to the loathsome idols of the house of Israel (in worship), nor defiled his neighbour's wife, 16. nor oppressed any one, nor kept back any pledge, nor spoiled any one of his goods by fraud or injustice, but has given his bread to the hungry, covered the naked with clothing, 17. kept back his hand from iniquity, taken no usury or

[1] **Ezek. xviii. 1-17.**

[2] Exod. xxii. 25. Deut. xxiv. 12. Amos ii. 8.

[3] Lev. vi. 4.

[4] Advances to men on their crops, etc., are meant.

[5] This was forbidden, at least between Israelites. Ezek. xviii. 18. Neh. v. 7, 10, ff. See also Exod. xxii. 25. Deut. xxiii. 20. Lev. xxv. 36. Prov. xxviii. 8. Ps. xv. 5.

interest, but kept My commands and walked in My laws; he shall not die for his father's sin. He shall surely live !

"18. His father, however,[1] because *he* cruelly oppressed, robbed his brother (Hebrew) by fraud and injustice, and did what was not good among his fellow tribesmen,[2] behold, *he* shall die for his iniquity.

"19. But do ye still say, 'Why does not the son bear a share of the father's sin ?' (I answer,) If the son has done only what is lawful and right, and has kept all My laws, and obeyed them, he shall surely live!

"20. The soul that sins, *it* shall die. But a son shall not bear any part of his father's sin, nor shall the father bear any part of the son's sin. The righteousness of the righteous shall rest on him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall rest upon *him*.

"21. But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all My laws, and do what is lawful and right—he shall surely live. He shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he has committed shall not be remembered against him. He shall live, for the righteousness he has done. 23. Have I any pleasure (do you think) in the death of the wicked ? saith the Lord Jehovah. Would I not much rather that he turn from his ways and live ?

"24. When (on the other hand) the righteous turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, doing according to all that the wicked does—shall he live ? (No !) All his righteousness that he has done shall not be remembered. For his unfaithfulness that he has committed, and for his sin that he has sinned, for them—he shall die.

"25. Nevertheless ye say:[3] The way of the Lord is not right.[4] Hear, now, O house of Israel, is not My way right ? Are not your ways wrong ? 26. If the righteous turn away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, and dies for it—then he dies for the iniquity that he has committed. 27. But if the wicked turn away from the wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall preserve his soul alive. 28. Because he sees and turns away from all his transgressions that he has committed, he shall surely live—he shall not die. 29. Yet the house of Israel says: 'The way of the Lord is not right.' O house of Israel, are not My ways right ? Are not your ways wrong ?

"30. Therefore, I will judge you, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah. Repent, and turn from all your transgres-

[1] **Ezek. xviii. 18-30.** [2] Lev. xix. 16.

[3] The name of God translated in the text "the Lord Jehovah," is, in the Hebrew, "Adonai Jehovah."

[4] Literally, "evenly poised." It may mean, "consistent at all times."

sions, that your sin may not cause your punishment. 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions,[1] in which you have sinned, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, saith the Lord Jehovah. Therefore, turn ye—and live!"

In these anxious, agitated years, when the exiles in Babylonia, like watchers by the death-bed of the State, could think or speak of little else but the land they had left for ever—its old glories, its present sorrows—their poets doubtless sang the bright memories of the one, and the touching story of the others, in many a lyric and lament. Ezekiel, a true patriot, like all the prophets, unburdened his heart in a lament over the two kings of his race then captive—the one in Egypt, the other in Babylon—and over the city which, like every Jew, he loved with a passionate tenderness. He had spoken of the inevitable ruin of his fatherland through its sins, and the fate of the country brought up in his mind that of its princes —the living dead—whose glory had faded, whose eyes should never again behold Jerusalem, whose palace had been exchanged for a prison! In a touching elegy, he compares Judah, the mother of kings, to a lioness lying down amidst others of its kind—the kingdoms round it. Her successive generations of young and brave princes are lions' whelps, coming on in due time to full growth, as crowned kings. Two, in particular, arrest his thoughts—each in his turn snared by the hunters and carried off captive—Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, or Zedekiah, one hardly knows which.

"XIX. 2. What was thy mother (O Judah)?—he sang—a lioness which lay down among lions, and nourished her young amidst other

[1] **Ezek. xviii. 31-32; xix. 1-2.**

young lions.[1] 3. And she brought up one of her whelps (till) he became a young lion,[2] and learned to catch prey, and became a man-eater. 4. But the nations heard of him; he was taken in their pit,[3] and they brought him with rings in his jaws[4] to the land of Egypt.[5]

"5. Then, when she saw that he was banished from her, and that her Hope was lost and gone, she took another of her young (and brought him up), and he, also, became a young lion. 6. And he went to and fro among the lions, and was himself a young lion, and learned to catch prey, and became a man-eater. 7. He brought evil to the palaces (of neighbouring kings), and laid waste their cities; the land was desolate; its multitude (fleeing in terror) at the noise of his roar.[6]

"8. Yet the nations, from many[7] countries, set themselves against him round about, and spread their net over him and took him in their pit. 9. Then they put him in a cage, with rings in his jaws, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into a dungeon, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel."[8]

Such was the fate of the kings; that of the people was to be equally disastrous. Israel had been a powerful nation, ruling for a time from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and boasting a line of kings, who, in Judah, had sat on the throne, in continuous descent from David, for nearly five

[1] The kings of Judah were not behind the princes of other countries round.

[2] Gen. xlix. 9. The "young lion" is the animal in its young vigour. **Ezek. xix. 3-9.**

[3] A common way of taking lions.

[4] Isa. xxxvii. 29. Wild beasts were led by rings in their nostrils or jaws, and captives whom it was specially wished to insult were treated in the same way. See vol. v. p. 87; also Isa. xxxvii. 29. Ezek. xxxviii. 4; xxix. 4. 2 Kings xix. 28. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.

[5] Jehoahaz is alluded to. He was carried off to Egypt by Necho, after his father Josiah's death at Megiddo.

[6] This could hardly be applied, except by poetic license, to Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), who reigned only three months. Zedekiah may have been engaged in wars; his predecessors had no opportunity for them. If, however, the language be taken as that of poetry, the lament would suit Jehoiachin better than Zedekiah, for the former was appointed king by his countrymen; the latter was a Chaldæan nominee. Ezekiel, moreover, seems to have regarded Jehoiachin as the legitimate king on this account. Ezek. xvii. 1. Besides, he bitterly denounced the breach of oath by Zedekiah, and on this ground shewed him no respect.

[7] Literally, "the."

[8] Nothing is known of the place of imprisonment of either Jehoiachin or Zedekiah in Babylon.

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hundred years. Its pride and sin, however, had brought terrible punishment. Ten tribes, out of twelve, had been exiles in a distant land for nearly a hundred and fifty years, and Judah itself had seen the flower of its people carried off to Babylonia. What remained of its glory was fast waning; the now feeble State was tottering to its final ruin.

These ideas the prophet embodies in his former image of the fatherland as a once lordly vine, the wood of which had been so massive as to serve for kingly sceptres. In its pride it had shot out its branches far and near, but the burning sirocco had been let loose on it; its stout branches had withered and been broken off, and fire had consumed it.

"XIX. 10. Thy mother [1] (Judah) mightest thou further compare to a vine [2] planted in (the time of) thy rest, in a garden land, by the waters. She was fruitful and had many branches by reason of the abundance of water; 11. its boughs grew so thick they made sceptres for rulers, and its height rose towering amidst the clouds; so glorious did it seem in its loftiness, in the multitude of its branches! [3]

"12. But (the wrath of God, like a tempest from heaven,) rooted it up, and cast it to the ground, and the (burning) sirocco from the desert dried up its fruit; its strong branches were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them. 13. And now it is planted in the wilderness,[4]

[1] **Ezek. xix. 10-13.**

[2] This clause is variously translated; different emendations being given of the words, "in thy blood," which are apparently a corruption of the text. I adopt the renderings of De Wette, Keil, and Ewald, conjointly.

[3] "It was seen far and near from its height and the multitude of its branches."—Smend. The ancient sceptre (Shabet) and the staff (Matteh), used as a sign of rank by heads of tribes, clans, and encampments, by judges and others, was a simple rod, in its natural state—the leaves and twigs only removed. The Arab Sheiks and the Mohammedan Mufti and Ulemas—the equivalent to our clergy—still carry such a rude staff, as high as themselves, never appearing in public without it. When office is hereditary, as in the case of Sheiks, the staff passes from father to son till it is worn quite thin where the hand has grasped it. It was this ancestral chieftain's staff on which Jacob leaned in worship (Gen. xlvii. 31); and the rods of Moses and Aaron were, in the same way, the ordinary signs of official dignity. Tamar demanded this Matteh from Judah—knowing its special worth as an unmistakable means of identifying him, and even with this he parted for the time. **Gen. xxxviii. 18.**

[4] Exiled.

in a dry and thirsty land, 14. and fire has gone from its branches (so rich in shoots),[1] and has devoured its fruit, so that it has no longer any lordly rod for a sceptre to rule.

"All this may well raise a song of lamentation, now and for ever!"

A long discourse, delivered by Ezekiel in August, B.C. 592,[2] the fourth year before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the seventh of the captivity of King Jeconiah, has fortunately been preserved. As was their custom from time to time, since the prophet did not appear in public, some of the elders of the Hebrew settlement on the Chebar came to him, "to enquire of Jehovah;" sitting down, in Eastern fashion, on the mats on the floor of the room, while he rested on the divan or sofa-like ledge that ran along its side. He had previously told them,[3] that God would have no relations with insincere worshippers, outwardly paying Him homage while in heart idolaters, and he repeated this now.[4] As long as they were still heathen in spirit, they could expect no communications from Jehovah, through His prophet. The opportunity to bring their sins, and those of the people at large, once more under notice was, nevertheless, too favourable to be lost. The impulse "to judge them," by rehearsing anew the sins laid to their charge, and proclaiming afresh the certain result, was irresistible. How best to rouse their conscience must have been a matter of anxious thought; perhaps if he recalled to their minds the sins of their forefathers and its terrible punishment, the vivid parallel to their own case might arrest them. Addressing them, therefore, he thus began, speaking in the name of God:

[1] **Ezek. xix. 14.**
[2] Smend says B.C. 590.
[3] Ezek. xiv. 1-11.
[4] **Ezek. xx. 1-4.**

"XX. 5. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[1] In the day that I chose Israel, and lifted up My hand (in an oath) to the seed of the house of Jacob (that I would be their God), and revealed Myself to them in the land of Egypt,[2] when I lifted up My hand to them, swearing by Myself, 'I am Jehovah your God;'[3]— 6. even in that day, when I lifted up My hand thus to them, promising that I would lead them forth from Egypt,[4] to a land I had looked out for them—a land flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands[5]—7. I said to them—'Cast ye away, every man, the abominable gods to which he looks, and do not defile yourselves with the loathsome gods of Egypt.[6] I am Jehovah, your God.' 8. But they were disobedient, and would not hearken to Me; they did not, every man, cast away the abominable gods to which they looked, nor did they forsake the loathsome gods of Egypt. For this, therefore, I threatened to pour out My wrath on them, and to let loose My anger against them, in the land of Egypt.

"9. Yet I acted for (the honour of) My own name, so that it should not be dishonoured before the heathen, in whose midst they were, in whose sight I had revealed Myself to them, as about to bring them forth from the land of Egypt.[7] 10. I led them, therefore, forth from the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. 11. And (at Sinai) I gave them My laws, and made known to them My statutes, by which, if a man do them, he shall live.[8] 12. I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that it was I, Jehovah, who sanctify them (by these holy seasons; bringing them thus into special communion with Myself).[9] 13. But the house of Israel rebelled

[1] **Ezek. xx. 5-13.** [2] Exod. iii. 8; iv. 31. Deut. iv. 34.
[3] Exod. xx. 2.
[4] Exod. iii. 8-17. Deut. viii. 7, 9. Jer. xxxii. 22.
[5] Ps. xlviii. 2. Dan. viii. 9. Zech. vii. 14.
[6] Lev. xvii. 7; xviii. 3.
[7] Exod. xxxii. 12. Num. xiv. 16. Deut. ix. 28.
[8] Lev. xviii. 5. Deut. xxx. 16.
[9] Wellhausen (*Gesch. Israel*, vol. i. p. 117) would have us believe that the Sabbath was originally a day of festivity, and only gradually darkened into gloom under priestly influence during the exile. The agony of the Shunammite widow at the death of her son (2 Kings iv. 22), leading her to order her ass for an instant journey to the prophet, is taken as a proof that journeys longer than legal on Sabbaths were then common, and that daily occupations were not forbidden. For does not the servant answer that it is neither new moon nor Sabbath? In Hos. ii. 11 it is said, "I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts." In Amos the extortioners of Samaria long for the Sabbath to sell their grain (viii. 5). Are not these, we are asked, proofs that the Sabbath was *anciently* a day of rejoicing and worldly business? As if a modest joy

against Me in the wilderness; they did not follow My laws, and they despised My statutes, by which a man shall live, if he do them ; and they grossly dishonoured My Sabbaths, so that I said I would pour out My indignation upon them in the wilderness, to destroy them.

"14. But I acted for the honour[1] of My name, so that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I had brought them forth from Egypt. 15. Yet I lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness (in solemn asseveration), that I would *not* bring them into the land which I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey —the glory of all lands! 16. because they despised My statutes and did not walk in My laws, and dishonoured My Sabbaths, for their hearts went after their loathsome gods. 17. But My eye spared them, so that I did not utterly destroy them, or make an end of them (altogether) in the wilderness.[2]

"18. But (though the fathers were condemned to die in the wilderness) I said to their sons, 'Walk ye not in the laws of your fathers, nor observe their statutes, nor defile yourselves with their loathsome gods. 19. I am Jehovah, your God; walk in My laws, and keep My statutes, and do them; 20. and hallow My Sabbaths, that they may be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I, Jehovah, am your God.' 21. Yet these sons (like their fathers) rebelled against Me, and did not walk in My laws, or keep My statutes, to do them, by which, if a man keep them, he shall live, and they dishonoured My Sabbaths. Then I told them that I would pour out My indignation upon them, and let loose My anger against them in the wilderness.

"22. Nevertheless, I held back My hand, and acted for the honour of My name, that it should not be dishonoured in the sight of the heathen, before whom I had brought them forth (from Egypt). 23. But I lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness (once more, and

were incompatible with the right observance of the Sabbath, or the worldliness of extortioners an illustration of its proper use ! That it is said, moreover, in Exodus and Deuteronomy that the labourer and his beast are to rest on the Sabbath, while it is not said (?) that the master should rest ! shews that the idea of the day as one of universal rest must be later ! It is on such arguments as these that the origin of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers—or nearly the whole of them—during the Captivity, is assumed as demonstrated. As if the lax practice could not naturally come in by degrees, and be uprooted only by a reaction such as the exile produced ! Of course, however, while repudiating the insinuation that the ancient Jewish Sabbath was a mere boisterous holiday, I do not forget that the superstitious and painful slavery, which the Rabbis invented as its proper observance, was then unknown.

[1] **Ezek. xx. 14 23.**

[2] Only that generation was to perish in the wilderness.

solemnly swore) that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the lands,[1] 24. because they had not obeyed My statutes,[2] but had despised My laws, and dishonoured My Sabbaths, and their hearts had gone after the loathsome gods of their fathers. 25. And (since they would not observe My good laws), I (afterwards, when they had entered Canaan) gave them laws that were not good (as Mine are), and statutes by which they should not live—(statutes leading to death, not to life, as Mine do—26. that is, I left them to follow the heathenism of Canaan), and polluted them in their own offerings, by giving them up to sacrifice their first-born sons to Moloch, that I might appal them at their own conduct, and that they might know that I am Jehovah![3]

"27. Therefore, speak to the house of Israel, O son of man, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Your fathers still further sinned against Me by acting treacherously towards Me. 28. For, when I had brought them into the land which I had sworn to give them,[4] they looked on every high hill and every thickly leaved tree, and there offered their sacrifices, and presented the bitter offence of their offerings:[5] and burnt their sweet-smelling incense, and poured out their drink offerings (to their idols) 29. till men came to say, 'What is the Bamah—the high place—to which ye go up?' (But it was the spot to which those bent on uncleanness betake themselves), and thus its name is Bamah (in this sense) to this day.[6]

"30. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Are you polluted in the same way as your fathers? Do you

[1] Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii. [2] **Ezek. xx. 24–30.**

[3] Smend actually ventures to quote this verse as proving that Jehovah instituted human sacrifices! Ewald very justly refers the hard laws to the claim by Jehovah of all the first-born (Exod. xiii. 11–13), "which the prophet speaks of as a *defiling*, because it was a short step from this to offering first-born sons to Moloch (see ver. 31). and because this often happened" through a perversion of the Divine law, which imposed only a slight redemption money on the parents, in lieu of the claim on their child. See Lev. xviii. 21; Deut. xviii. 10. Compare, for language similar to that of Ezekiel, Rom. i. 24; Acts vii. 42; 2 Thess. ii. 11. Jerome says, "God gave them, when dispersed among the nations, laws that were not good—that is, He gave them up to their own thoughts and desires, that they should do what was not for their good." *ad loc.* As to the relation of God to human sacrifices, see Jer. vii. 21; xxxii. 35, and other passages.

[4] Literally, "lifted up My hand." [5] Their "corban."

[6] *Baim*, "those going up," from the verb "to come," was taken in a bad sense, as implying "coming to commit fornication," and was used in this way as a verbal play on the word "Bamah," a high place. To go thither and to commit uncleanness were assumed as identical.

commit uncleanness with your abominable idols? 31. Do you defile yourselves to this day with all your loathsome gods,[1] presenting them your offerings, and making your sons pass through the fire to them—and shall I (allow Myself to) be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will not (allow Myself to) be inquired of by you. 32. And what you think in your minds, 'that you will be like the heathen—like the people of other countries—and worship wood and stone,' shall not come to pass. 33. As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will be King over you, yes, with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of fierce indignation; 34. and I will lead you forth from among the peoples, and gather you from the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with an outpouring of fierce indignation, 35. and will bring you into the wilderness of the nations[2] (between Canaan and Babylon), and there will I hold judgment on you, face to face. 36. As I held judgment on your fathers in the wilderness (between Canaan and Egypt), so I will hold judgment on *you*, saith the Lord Jehovah! 37. (And I will there carefully separate the good from the bad, as a shepherd, standing at the gate of the fold), lets his sheep pass out under his staff (one by one, to count their number and see their state); and I will bring you under the yoke of My (new) covenant,[3] 38. and I will separate from among you the rebellious, and those who sin against Me. And I will bring those from the land of their sojourning, where they are exiles,[4] but these shall not enter into the land of Israel; that ye may know that I am Jehovah!"

But God will not cast off His people for ever!

"39. As for you, O house of Israel; thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Go, serve every one, his loathsome gods; yet, hereafter, ye will surely hearken to Me, and not pollute My holy name any more with your (idolatrous) offerings, and with your loathsome gods;[5] 40. for on My holy mountain (Zion); on the lofty mountain of Israel, saith the Lord

[1] **Ezek. xx. 31-40.**

[2] Where many peoples—Syrians, Arabs, and others, from all parts pass and repass.

[3] This, which is the literal rendering as the text stands, does not appear to some a suitable sense. Various emendations have therefore been proposed. Hitzig proposes, "into the purifying crucible." The Septuagint reads, "I will bring you in by number." Smend conjectures that the words should run, "I bring you, when numbered, or by number, into the land."

[4] Rosenmüller. Schroeder.

[5] The text demands this emendation, which is supported by Ewald, Hävernick, Keil, and [illegible]d—that is, by men of all shades of opinion. Arnheim renders the

Jehovah; there, shall all the house of Israel serve Me, all of them in the (holy) land; there, will I receive them (when they approach Me in worship), and there will I (Myself) call for their heave offerings, and your choicest gifts, of all you consecrate to Me.[1] 41. With your sweet odour (of worthy offerings) will I accept you,[2] when I lead you forth from the nations, and gather you out of the countries in which you have been scattered, and I will shew myself holy (in My dealings towards you), in the eyes of the heathen. 42. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land which I swore[3] to give to your fathers. 43. And then ye shall remember your ways, and all your doings, by which ye have defiled yourselves, and ye will loathe yourselves in your own eyes, for all your sins that ye have committed. 44. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I deal with you (in mercy, and) for My name's sake; not according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah!"

But it was of no avail that Ezekiel preached thus on the Chebar, or Jeremiah in Jerusalem. The Egyptian party had gained the upper hand, alike in Babylonia and in Judah, and Zedekiah was being steadily pushed to open revolt. Another series of appeals of the banished prophet to his fellow-exiles has come down to us, and shews that the people still cherished a vain hope of shaking off the Chaldæan vassalage. The addresses seem to have been delivered in the third and second year[4] before the fall of the Holy City, when Babylon was already on the eve of marching against his rebellious countrymen. What none had believed when foretold by him, was now, at last, plainly close at hand. Roused to pitiless fury by the ingratitude and faithlessness of Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar was pre-

passage, "Go and serve every one his idols, since ye will not listen to Me: only, dishonour not My holy name any longer by your gifts and your idols!" So Noyes, and De Wette. The Septuagint has, "put away each one his *evil* ways, and hereafter, if ye hearken to Me, then ye shall no more profane My holy name by your gifts and your doings (ways)."

[1] Choicest=literally, "first of all you consecrate to me," "of all your holy things."

[2] **Ezek. xx. 41-44.** [3] "Lifted up My hand."

[4] That is, in B.C. 591 and 590.

paring to burst from the north-east, where Ezekiel lived, like a destroying storm, on Judah, far to the south. Yet as a Jew and a priest, banished from his country and its temple, the calamity, though so long anticipated, well-nigh overpowered the prophet as it approached. The march of the Chaldæan army seemed before him, in its successive stages. He almost counted the hours till it should invest Jerusalem. Might there not be some repentance even yet—if not in the doomed city, at least among the exiles? Alas, it was hopeless. A great blow in his own household was to bring the sad truth home to him, and teach him that he was henceforth to be silent till the inevitable judgment had fallen. His wife, whom he dearly loved, died suddenly at this time, and her death was used as a Divine sign. He was not to weep for the dead! She was gone! And, so, his brethren might spare their laments for their country; nothing could save it!

In the first of these new utterances the prophet pictures Judah, with its towns and villages, as a forest in the south —for it lay in that direction from the Chebar. Fire, kindled by God Himself, through His instrument Nebuchadnezzar, breaks out in it, and no one can quench it.

"XX. 45. The word of Jehovah came to me;[1] 46. Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and speak southwards, against the forests of the open country, 47. and say to the southern forest: Hear the word of Jehovah! Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I kindle a fire in thee, and it will devour every green tree in thee, and every dry. Its flaming fire shall not be quenched, and every face, from south to north, will be lighted up by it. 48. And all flesh shall see that I, Jehovah, have kindled it, and that no one can quench it!"

Eagerly clinging to their wild hope for their country, the exiled community affected not to understand these

[1] **Ezek. xx. 45–48.** The 21st chapter begins here in the Hebrew Bible.

metaphors and parables, so natural to Ezekiel, but they had no cause of such a complaint in a discourse delivered to them a little later.

"XXI. 2. Son of man[1] (said the Inner Voice to him), set thy face towards Jerusalem, and pour out thy words towards the holy places, and preach against the land of Israel, 3. and say to it: Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I come against thee and unsheathe My sword, and destroy from out of thee both the righteous and the wicked! 4. Therefore, because I have resolved to destroy both the righteous and the wicked (from out of thee), My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh, from south to north (of the land); 5. that all flesh may know that (it is I), Jehovah, (who) have drawn My sword out of its scabbard, (and that) I will not sheathe it again. 6. Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, as if thy loins were breaking; sigh bitterly before their eyes! 7. And when they say to thee, 'Why sighest thou?' say, 'For the report that has come to my ears!' For every heart shall melt, and all hands fall down, and every spirit despair, and all knees shake.[2] Behold, (what has been foretold) is come, and is being carried out! says the Lord Jehovah."

The same terrible warning was soon after repeated in a different form. The destruction so imminent had been pictured as a great conflagration; it was now presented as a grand carnival of the sword! "The word of Jehovah" again came to the prophet, saying:

"9. Son of man, prophesy, and say: Thus says Jehovah: Say, A Sword, a Sword is sharpened and whetted; 10. sharpened to make a sore slaughter; whetted that it may flash (like the lightning)! Woe to thee, O Staff, the sceptre of My son Judah—this sword despises all such weak rods![3] 11. It has been whetted that it may be grasped in

[1] **Ezek. xxi. 1-11.** [2] Melt into water.

[3] This passage is so corrupt that any rendering of it must be conjectural. Gesenius translates it, "It is sharpened against the prince of the tribe of my son (Judah) who despises all wood"—that is, all the lighter punishments of the past. Ewald, "No weak rod of my son, the feeblest of wood." Wellhausen, "Not weak as the rod; not the most contemptible of all wood." Arnheim, "A glittering terror; a scourge that makes men howl; sparing no tree." Noyes, "Or shall we make mirth? The

the hand! Yes! it is sharpened and whetted, to give it to the hand of the slayer! 12. Cry and howl, O son of man![1] for it is about to descend on My people; on all the princes of Israel! They are reserved for the sword, along with My people! Smite therefore on thy thigh (in sign of great sorrow![2] 13. For the sword has been proved, and what has it shewn itself? As if it were a weak rod? No! verily not,[3] saith the Lord God!

"14. Thou, therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite your hands together (in despair); the sword doubles, aye, trebles its fury; it slays the multitude; it slays the great; it searches into the inmost chamber.[4] 15. That their hearts may despair, and that many may fall, I have set the flashing sword before all her gates! Ah! how it glitters like lightning; how it is whetted for the slaughter! 16. Up (Sword)! smite eagerly on the right! turn swiftly to the right! turn swiftly to the left! Turn whithersoever thou art appointed! 17. I (Jehovah) will smite My hands together (against them, in fierce indignation), and let loose My wrath! I, Jehovah, have said it."

Hitherto Ezekiel had spoken in figures, but the time had come to speak plainly. His countrymen are to be told that Nebuchadnezzar is, already, virtually, on the march against Judah and Ammon, which have both thrown off their allegiance. It was a question, to which he would first turn; the people of Jerusalem hoping that he would march against Ammon before attacking their own city, and thus give them full time to prepare, and to summon to their aid[5] the Egyptian army on which they depended.

staff of my son despiseth every rod." De Wette, substantially as in the text above. Eichhorn, "Ah thou (Zedekiah), who bearest the kingly staff, the sceptre of My people; the sword laughs at every such bit of wood!"

[1] **Ezek. xxi. 12–17.**

[2] To smite on the thigh is often used as a token of great trouble of mind. See Jer. xxxi. 19. *Iliad*, xii. 162; xv. 397. Plutarch also tells us, that when Fabius saw his men flee, he gave a great groan and smote on his thigh.

[3] Ewald. Eichhorn's rendering of this passage, which is so corrupt in its text as to defy translators, is, "The proof is made: how? should not the sword mock at the mere rod?"

[4] Eichhorn. De Wette is virtually the same. Only a guess at the meaning can be made in this, as in the other instances of defective text I have noted.

[5] Ezek. xvii.

But, contrary to this, the prophet announces that Jehovah will send the Chaldæan king directly against Jerusalem. He is, therefore, pictured as standing at the parting of the roads to Ammon and the Holy City, uncertain which to enter, and consulting his oracle for direction. But Jehovah gives the answer. Even this warning, however, may fall on deaf ears; if so, the heavier will the fearful vengeance of the Almighty burst on the perjured Zedekiah and on his princes.

"XXI. 18. The word of Jehovah came to me again, saying:[1] 19. Son of man! Fix[2] on two roads by which the sword of the king of Babylon may come; let both run out from one country, and hew thee a finger-post[3] (such as stands) at the head of the way to a city. 20. Let it point, in one direction, so that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites,[4] and in the other, that it may come to Judah and the strong-walled Jerusalem! 21. For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the roads, at the head of the two ways, to use divination, (as to which he should take). He shakes (in a quiver) the two arrows,[5] (marked Ammon and Jerusalem, to see which will be drawn out first, by one blindfolded);[6] he enquires of the teraphim; he looks at the liver (of the sacrifices).[7]

"22. (And, now,) in his right hand (the fortunate one) he holds the arrow marked 'Jerusalem' (which has been drawn by him from the quiver). He orders forward the battering rams, to open a breach (by breaking down the wall);[8] he commands that the loud battle-cry be given; that the battering rams be set up at the gates; that an (enclosing) mound be raised; that a tower be built, (to sweep the top of the wall). 23. To the people (in Jerusalem) all this seems a false prophecy; they think they will have weeks upon weeks of respite;[9] but Jeho-

[1] **Ezek. xxi. 18–23.**

[2] Literally, "make thee."

[3] Literally, "cut a hand."

[4] See vol. iii. p. 282.

[5] This was a common form of divination among the heathen Arabs. Perceval, *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes*, 1847, vol. ii. p. 310. On divination by the liver, see Lenormant, *La Divination*, *n.* 58.

[6] Smend.

[7] Cic., *De Div.*, i. 16; ii. 13. Diod., ii. 49.

[8] Schrader. De Wette.

[9] Ewald. Smend. The Hebrew for oath, Sheba, means also a week, and the form in the text is capable of both renderings. Some render this clause, "who have sworn oaths to them" (to the Chaldæans); others, "who have received solemn oaths (from God)."

vah will call their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken!

"24. Therefore,[1] thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye bring your iniquity to remembrance, so that your transgressions come to the light, and your sins, in all your conduct, appear; because ye bring them to remembrance, you will be taken by His hand! 25. And thou, wicked, falling[2] prince of Israel (Zedekiah), whose day is come—the day of thy uttermost punishment! 26. (As to thee,) thus saith the Lord Jehovah, 'Take off his royal turban! Off with his crown!' This (humbled and ruined) kingdom is not the kingdom (to come hereafter)—that of the promised future! The low shall be exalted and the high abased! 27. I will bring (the city to) ruins, to ruins, to ruins; what has been shall be no more, till He come whose right it is; to Him will I give it!"

In the troubled time of Jehoiakim's reign the Ammonites, in common with the Moabites and Edomites, had shewn their hereditary hatred of Israel, by joining flying columns of Nebuchadnezzar's troops in harassing and plundering Judah.[3] Since then, they, like others, had felt the heavy pressure of the Chaldæan yoke, and, in common with the different kingdoms of Palestine, had plotted a rebellion. Envoys from their king, as we have seen, had met ambassadors from Edom, Moab, Tyre, and Sidon, at Jerusalem, to form a league against Babylon; Egypt having promised to aid them. Zedekiah had, doubtless, relied on this support, especially as Ammon had compromised itself deeply by its truculent bearing towards the Great King. But Ezekiel knew how worthless this confidence would prove. Hastening to submit, on the first approach of the invader, Ammon and the other Palestine states of the south and east, would throw themselves into the contest as the allies of the Chaldæans and the exulting foes of Judah. For this they, too, would receive heavy punishment at the hand

[1] **Ezek. xxi. 24-27.** [2] = doomed to be slain. [3] 2 Kings xxiv. 2.

of God. Lying prophets in Ammon itself had predicted its safety when the storm should burst, and in anticipation of this it had already shewn its insincerity. A short time before, the fawning ally of Judah, it now affected to treat her with scorn. Under these circumstances, Ezekiel was commissioned to denounce its king and people.

"XXI. 28. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning the Ammonites,[1] and concerning the scorn (they pour on Judah): Say thou, the sword, the sword, is drawn for the slaughter: it is whetted to the uttermost, to flash destruction! 29. Thou trustest to deceitful visions (of thy prophets), and lettest lies be declared to thee, that the sword will descend only on the neck of Israel, (as doomed to fall) for its wickedness—(Israel,) whose day (thou sayest) approaches, when its sin shall receive final punishment! 30. Put thy sword back into its sheath! In your own land, whence you sprang, the land of your birth, I will judge you. 31. And I will pour out My wrath on you; I will blow on you the fire of My indignation,[2] and give you into the hand of wild men, skilled in destroying. 32. You shall become food for fire: your blood shall be poured out on the earth. You will be no more remembered, for I, Jehovah, have said it!"

[1] **Ezek. xxi. 28-32.**

[2] The wrath of God is conceived as breathing forth flames against His enemies.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVE OF THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

THE guilt which was about to bring down the ruin of the Jewish State had been, as we have seen, the constant theme of Jeremiah and Ezekiel for many years; but the hope of future reformation so entirely depended on its being kept before the public mind, with all its terrible results, that no repetition seemed too frequent. It was, in fact, by this unwearied presentation of the truth, to the minds of their contemporaries, however much they disliked it, that these great preachers ultimately awakened the national conscience, and led to that amazing reaction from the idolatry of the past, of which Judaism, in its later development, became the embodiment.

Never in the history of nations, so far as appears, has a sacred order anywhere risen, more earnest, self-sacrificing, noble in their purity of life, lofty in their realization of the true and eternal, or bravely faithful in their battle with sin, than the Hebrew prophets. They really believed what they said, and spoke accordingly. No fear of the great, or of the multitude, could silence them. Appointed to proclaim the whole truth, without circumlocution or mitigation, they did so, however invidious, "vulgar," "censorious," unpopular, or perilous the duty. Self-seeking, worldly-minded members of the order abounded, as they do in all ages among the public ministers of religion;

men who toned down the Word of God to suit their audiences; astutely careful to let abuses lie undisturbed, to flatter the great, to avoid whatever was disagreeable to their patrons, and, like keen and crafty men of the world, to make sure of as much of this life as they could, lest they should by any chance come short in the other. The fidelity of the true prophets was ill calculated to promote their worldly interests, but their names live for evermore; their self-sacrifice was the regeneration of their race, and they remain for all ages the ideal of true preachers. Does our century realize and repeat the lesson of their example?

In the enumeration of the sins of his contemporaries, Ezekiel had laid especial stress on their idolatry; but the general corruption of the times had not escaped his lash. One sin, however, among many, had not been denounced as yet with the same fulness as others. The treatment of their banished brethren, by those who remained in Palestine, had been shameful. Victims of the same mean and sordid lust for gain that still marks the Jew, they had been piteously cheated and over-reached, in the forced sales of their goods and property, when hurried off. This was now to be laid to the charge of the extortioners. The new lords of the city, moreover, had proved as vile as their predecessors; anarchy reigned; the streets were dangerous from the number of murders, and society was dissolving into its elements. The men who had been banished for their sins had, in fact, been better than those left behind. A stern indictment of such a state of things was demanded.

"XXII. 1. The word of Jehovah—he tells us—came to him, saying: 2. Son of man,[1] if you judge the bloody city (Jerusalem), do it so as to shew her all her abominations! 3. Say to her, Thus says the Lord

[1] Ezek. xxii. 1-3.

Jehovah: O city, in whose midst blood is poured out, drawing on thee the time of thy doom; (O city,) defiled by the loathsome gods she makes for herself: 4. Thou art guilty through the blood thou hast shed,[1] and art defiled by the loathsome gods thou hast made (for thyself); thou hast brought near the days (of thy punishment), and hastened the years (of thy retribution)! Because of thy sins I will make thee the contempt of the heathen; the mockery of all lands! 5. The near and the far off will alike deride thee, and call thee 'thou city of a stained name, and full of commotion!'

"6. Behold, the princes of Israel (thy aristocracy) have sought, every one, to shed blood in thee to his utmost. 7. Men have despised father and mother in thee; the stranger has been treated unjustly in thy midst; the fatherless and the widow have been oppressed in thee. 8. Thou hast despised My holy things. Thou hast dishonoured My Sabbaths; 9. men seeking to murder by spreading lies, are in thee. Thy people eat (idol sacrifices at the high places) on the hills; lewdness is committed in thee; 10. men expose their fathers' shame,[2] and go near her who is legally unclean.[3] 11. One commits abomination with his neighbour's wife; another basely defiles his daughter-in-law; another humbles his sister, his father's daughter! 12. Men shed blood in thee for hire; thou takest usury and increase; thou hast greedily over-reached thy fellow-citizens by extortion, and hast forgotten Me, says the Lord Jehovah!

"13. Behold, for this, I clap my hands together (in indignation at thee), when I think of the dishonest gains thou hast made, and of the blood that has flowed in thy midst. 14. Will thy heart bear up, or thy hands keep their strength, in the days when I deal with thee! I, Jehovah, speak, and will act! 15. I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee through the lands, and destroy thy uncleanness out of thee, 16. and punish thee so that I shall seem dishonoured in the sight of the heathen (in bringing such suffering on thee),[4] and (thus) thou shalt know that I am Jehovah!"

Such was the wicked city; but its day of reckoning was at hand. Its fine gold had become dim, its silver, dross; what pure ore there was must be separated from

[1] **Ezek. xxii. 4-16.** [2] Lev. xviii. 6-17; xx. 11. 1 Cor. v. 1.
[3] Lev. xii. 2; xviii. 19.
[4] This clause may be read, "thou shalt be polluted in thyself," or, "by thine own story." But this hardly suits the context and is not so striking.

the mass of worthless alloy, and this, the miseries of the siege, like the flames of a refiner's furnace, would effect!

"XXII. 18. Son of man,[1] said the secret Voice, the house of Israel has become dross to Me.[2] They are all of them brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the smelting furnace; they are the dross (left behind, in the smelting) of silver. 19. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye have all become dross, behold I will throw you into the midst of Jerusalem (as into a furnace, to purify you by the flames of the siege).[3] 20. As they cast silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the furnace, to blow fire on it and melt it; so will I cast you (into the furnace of war), and leave you there, and melt you, in My anger and fury. 21. Yes! I will gather you together (into Jerusalem), and blow on you the flames of My wrath, till ye be melted down in (the city). 22. As they melt silver in the furnace, so shall ye be melted down in the midst (of Jerusalem), and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out My fury upon you!"

All ranks in Judah were hopelessly corrupt; prophets, priests, nobles, and people. Even the king did nothing to save the state. It only remained to leave it to destruction.

"24. Son of man, say to Judah: Thou art barren and unfruitful, like a land which has no rain or moisture, in the day of wrath! 25. Her princes[4] in her midst are like[5] a roaring lion greedy for prey; they devour men's lives; seize property and goods; and multiply the widows in her midst! 26. Her priests violate My law and profane My holy things; they make no difference between the holy and common; they teach no distinction between clean and unclean, and hide their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them! 27. Her chief men are like greedy wolves, eager to shed blood, to destroy men's lives, to make sinful gain! 28. Her prophets coat over (their false hopes and bad lives) with the white plaster[6] of pretended

[1] **Ezek. xxii. 18-28.** [2] Isa. i. 22.
[3] They would flee to Jerusalem at the approach of the Chaldæans.
[4] Septuagint. Keil. See ver. 28.
[5] The change of one letter gives this sense.
[6] Literally, "daub them with white plaster."

visions, and lying revelations, saying, 'Thus says Jehovah,' though He has not spoken! 29. The people of the land practise violence,[1] and commit robbery, oppress the poor and helpless, and do illegal wrong to the stranger! 30. I sought, therefore, for one among them all that would fill in the gaps in the wall (and keep out My wrath), and that would stand in the breach before Me (by a holy life), to save the land, and turn Me back from destroying it; but I found none! 31. I will, therefore, pour out My indignation upon them; I will consume them in the flames of My wrath; I will pour their doings on their own head, saith the Lord Jehovah!"

Such a moral reformation as these utterances demanded was hopeless, so long as idolatry—the source of all debasement—was cherished in Judah. To restore the sincere worship of Jehovah was imperative, if a purer and better state of things were to be attained. Now, therefore, once more, at the eleventh hour, Ezekiel returned to the subject in a vivid allegory, in which Samaria and Jerusalem, the representatives of Israel and Judah, are delineated under the figure of two sisters, whose career had been shameful. The name of Aholah, the elder, shewed the difference between the Ten Tribes and Judah, for it meant, "She hath her own tent," or temple, in allusion to the Northern Kingdom having framed a new religion, and repudiated, from the first, the pure faith of Jehovah. The name of the younger, Aholibah, "My tent, or temple, is in her," marked the special glory of Jerusalem. By a usage familiar in the prophets, the idolatry of the two, and alliances sought by them with foreign nations, are denounced as adultery; Jehovah being regarded as their husband. The division into two kingdoms is represented as practically dating from the Egyptian bondage, though historically so much later. In a former address Ezekiel

[1] Ezek. xxii. 29-31.

had reminded his people of the idolatry of their forefathers in the distant past;[1] he now recalls their recent history, in its relation to the heathenism of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, and also to their political coquetting with these nations. To our Western ideas his sensuous imagery seems strange, but the Children of the Sun have, in all ages, had modes of speech very different from those of the people of colder lands.

"XXIII. 1. The word of Jehovah[2] went forth to me again, saying: 2. Son of man, there were two women, the daughter of one mother,[3] 3. and they committed sin in Egypt; behaving shamefully even in their youth. 4. Their names were Aholah, the elder, and Aholibah, her sister, and I became their husband, and they bore sons and daughters: Aholah became Samaria, and Aholibah, Jerusalem.[4]

"5. But Aholah—(that is, Samaria)—played the harlot, although she was Mine, and she sighed[5] after her lovers; (above all, after) the warrior Assyrians,[6] 6. clothed in blue (or violet) purple—pashas[7] and rulers,[8] all of them handsome men, in their early prime, cavaliers riding on horses. 7. And she gave herself up to sin with them—with the chosen sons of Assyria and with all on whom she doted; and defiled herself with all their loathsome gods. 8. Yet she did not give up her idolatries brought from Egypt,[9] for in her youth she had yielded to them. 9. For this reason I delivered her into the hand of those she loved, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted, 10. and they dealt shamefully with her, took her sons and her daughters (into captivity), and slew her, (herself), with the sword, and thus she became a warning[10] to women, for they had carried out My judgment upon her."

[1] Ezek. xvi. [2] **Ezek. xxiii. 1-10.**

[3] Sarah.

[4] They were already fallen when Jehovah took them as His.

[5] Loved inordinately, looked amorously towards, made eyes to.

[6] The Hebrew word for "neighbours" is almost identical with that for "war," and this in the plural seems to give the best sense.

[7] Prefects of divisions of Satrapies.

[8] Sagans=Assyrian, Sakan. It means one "appointed," "commissioned" from the king. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 270.

[9] Exod. xxiii. 13. Josh. xxiii. 7. Josh. xxiv. 14. Ezek. viii. 7-10; xvi. 26; xx. 4

[10] Literally, "a name."

Instead, however, of being warned by the example of the Northern Kingdom, Judah sinned still more than she. Not content with seeking an alliance with Assyria and introducing its idolatry, she acted similarly with the Babylonians also, and even, in the end, went after Egypt with more greediness than ever. Thus, the measure of her sins was at last full.

"11. But though her sister Aholibah[1]—(Jerusalem)—saw this, she became even viler in her wickedness, and worse in idolatries, than Aholah had been. 12. For she, too, doted upon the warrior Assyrians, pashas and rulers, gorgeously[2] arrayed cavaliers riding on horses, all of them handsome men, in their early prime. 13. Then I saw that she, also, was defiled; that both sisters took one way; and that Aholibah—14. Jerusalem—even increased her sins. For when she saw pictures of men on her house walls,[3] likenesses of Chaldæans, painted with vermilion, 15. with splendid girdles round their waists, and many-coloured turbans on their heads, the ends hanging down behind—all like lords to look at—the pictures of the sons of Babylon, whose birthplace is Chaldæa—16. when she saw these with her eyes, she forthwith fell in love with them, and sent messengers to them, to Chaldæa.[4] 17. And the sons of Babylon came to her, and they defiled her with their idolatry, and she was polluted by them. But ere long she (was not contented even with them, and her mind) was alienated from them. 18. She became shameless (in fact), and set on all kinds of idolatry. Then My mind, also, was alienated from her, as it had been from her sister, Samaria.

[1] **Ezek. xxiii. 11-18.**

[2] The "gorgeous array" of the princes and high dignitaries of the Euphrates may be judged from the robes of the kings and nobles in the illustrations in these volumes. We have, also, a description of a royal robe, woven or embroidered by the wonderful skill of the ladies of the royal harem, or of the royal workmen. It is in an inscription, on a black basalt tablet of King Marduk-nadin-akhi, and tells how his royal robe was bordered with gold fringe, and covered with exquisite designs, and precious stones, set in the web of the tissue; how the tiara was adorned with feathers and wide-open daisies, and how the broad lozenge-shaped stitches of his sandals were countless.

[3] An allusion to the introduction of paintings on the walls of the mansions of Jerusalem, in imitation of the custom in Babylon. Eastern women, shut up in their harems, could only thus be acquainted with strangers, at first.

[4] She sent messengers to learn their religion and bring it back with them, and also sought an alliance with them.

"19. Yet she still multiplied her sins,[1] bethinking herself of the days of her youth, when she had played the harlot against Me in Egypt. 20. And she made eyes to their (Egyptian) paramours, who are rank as he asses, lustful as stallions. 21. Yes! thou soughtest again the lewdness of thy youth, when, of old, thou wentest after the impurity of Egypt.

"22. Therefore, Jerusalem, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will stir up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is (now) alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side, 23. the Babylonians and all the Chaldæans; its king, its nobles and princes,[2] and all the Assyrians with them; all handsome young men, pashas and rulers, lords, and men of name,[3] all of them riding on horses. 24. They shall come against thee—(not now, as lovers, but) with (the tumult of) war chariots and clashing wheels,[4] and with an army of different nations, who will press against thee on every side (in full armour), with the large shield (covering the whole body), the small target (on the arm), and the helmet. And I will commit matters to them, and they will judge thee by their (pitiless) laws (of war). 25. And I will let my jealousy come on thee, and they will deal cruelly with thee; for they will cut off thy nose and thine ears;[5] the survivors (of thy manhood) will fall by their sword; they will carry off your young sons and your daughters (to sell as slaves), and what men are left of thee will perish in the conflagration (of the city). 26. They will also strip off thy clothes, and plunder thee of thy fine jewels. 27. Thus (if no other way), I will root out (thy love of foreign alliances) from thee, and thy heathenism, brought from the land of Egypt, so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes to their (enticements, or) idols, or think on Egypt any more.

"28. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I will give thee into the hand of those whom thou (once lovedst, but now) hatest: into the hand of them from whom thy mind is (now) alienated. 29. And they will treat thee with hatred—and take away all thy substance, and leave thee naked and bare, and the shame of thy conduct shall be exposed; thy unfaithfulness and thy heathenism. 30. I will do this to thee,

[1] **Ezek. xxiii. 19-30.**

[2] Mühlau und Volck. Gesenius. Keil. Hengstenberg. Pekod = "infliction of punishment." An allegorical name for Babel in Jer. l. 21. Shoa = noble, Koa = prince. Literally, a "stallion or breeding camel," which must be of noble blood.

[3] Councillors, Keil.

[4] Smend. Mühlau und Volck render it, "with weapons of attack."

[5] This has always been and still is the practice in war, in the East. See Winer, art. "Leibesstrafen." In Egypt, the nose of adulterers was cut off. Diod. Sic., i. 78.

because thou hast sought after the heathen, and because thou hast defiled thyself with their loathsome gods. 31. Thou hast gone in the steps of thy sister (Samaria);[1] therefore I will give thee her cup into thy hand!"

The mention of the cup of God's wrath leads the prophet to dwell on the figure.

"32. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup, (the cup of misery,) deep and wide, which holds much, and will make thee be laughed to scorn and had in derision. 33. For thou shalt be filled with (the) drunkenness (of grief) and sorrow; with the cup of desolation and ruin; with the cup thy sister Samaria has drunk. 34. Thou wilt drink it up and drain it to the dregs; craunching up its very pieces (as a wild beast does the bones of its prey), and tearing thy bosom; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah. 35. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou hast forgotten Me, and cast Me behind thy back; bear thou the punishment of thy unfaithfulness and idolatry!"

The guilt and deserved fate of both kingdoms are now recapitulated with still greater minuteness. They have served idols; given their children to Moloch; profaned even the temple by heathenism, and gone to distant lands for new gods and alliances hateful to Jehovah. Their sin must be sorely punished!

"36. Jehovah said, further, to me: Son of man, be thou accuser of Aholah[2] and Aholibah, and shew them their abominations—37. that they have committed adultery; that blood is on their hands; for they have committed adultery with their loathsome gods, and have even given their children, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them, burning them! 38. Still more, they have done this: they have defiled My sanctuary, on that day (when they offered up their children), and have profaned My Sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children, as offerings to their loathsome gods, on the same day they entered My temple (polluted as they were), and (thus) profaned it; lo, they practised idolatry even in the midst of My house!

[1] **Ezek. xxiii. 31-39.**

[2] Ezekiel here speaks against Samaria, nearly 150 years after its destruction.

"40. Yes, thou sentest for men[1] to come from distant lands, despatching a messenger to them, and, lo, when they came, thou bathedst thyself for them, paintedst thine eyes,[2] and arrayed thyself with thy jewels. 41. And thou satest thyself upon a grand couch, and setst out a table before them,[3] and didst put on it My incense and My oil.[4] 42. And they (the sisters) made merry with them, and played on instruments and sang, to them and to the mixed crowd of deep drinkers, from the wilderness,[5] and they put bracelets on the arms of the two sisters, and magnificent coronets on their heads. 43. Then said I to her that was worn out with adulteries—(Aholah, the eldest sister, long given to idolatry)—'Will these people now commit adultery with your younger sister also, and she with them?'[6] 44. But they came to her also, as to a harlot; thus they came to both Aholah and Aholibah, the unchaste women!

"45. But righteous men shall judge them, as adulteresses and women that shed blood are judged,[7] because they are adulteresses, and blood is on their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will bring a multitude against them, and give them up to ill-treatment and plunder. 47. And its host will stone them with stones, and hew them in pieces with swords; they will kill their sons and daughters, and burn their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I make lewdness cease out of the land, that all nations[8] may learn not to do after their sin. 49. And they shall pay back on you your iniquity, and ye shall bear the sins of your loathsome gods, and shall know that I am Jehovah Adonai."

The long-suffering patience of God was now, at length, exhausted, and no more appeals or warnings from Him disturbed the doomed capital. But the voice of the

[1] **Ezek. xxiii. 40-49.**

[2] In the East the eyelids are painted on the inner edges with *kohl*, a dark powder (Hebrew pūk), a mixture of lead and zinc. This made the white of the eyes more striking, and seemed to increase their size.

[3] The idol altar.

[4] Which should have been offered to Me.

[5] Masoretic note—Sobim = drinking men, or drunkards. Deut. xxi. 20. The men represent idols, which Jerusalem and Samaria adopted. Some of these, of wilderness tribes, may be called drunkards, from wine being offered them. I give the Septuagint reading.

[6] The text is apparently corrupt. But this seems the meaning.

[7] All the honourable men of a village were summoned to try an adulteress, and condemn her to death by stoning, if guilty.

[8] Literally, "women."

prophet was to be heard once more, though only to pronounce final sentence on his brethren, in the name of God. The day chosen for this word was ominous; the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah, about the tenth of December, B.C. 591;[1] the very day on which the army of Nebuchadnezzar sat down before Jerusalem to besiege it.[2] The form of a parable, so frequent with Ezekiel, is used. The citizens had done their best to prepare for a hard siege, but they felt that, at best, they were like flesh in a cauldron, to be sodden by the fires of war.[3] Ezekiel, moreover, had told them that their own chief men had, themselves, made the city a flesh-pot, by the innocent blood shed by them in it, and that these guilty ones would on that account be given to the foe.[4] A cauldron is now again seen on the fire, and, after being filled with the best pieces of flesh, is made to boil fiercely. But it is found to be foul with rust, and is ordered to be emptied. The population will indeed suffer intensely, but they will not all perish in their city; they will be led forth to captivity. The metaphor is in some degree mixed, as a double sense was intended. The boiling was to remove the rust; that is, the siege was to reform the people; but failing to do so, banishment must follow.

"XXIV. 2. Son of man[5] (said Jehovah), write down the exact date of this day, for the king of Babylon has on this very day begun the siege of Jerusalem. 3. And utter a parable to the House of Disobedience, and say to them: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Set on the cauldron, set it on, and pour water into it. 4. Put the pieces to be cooked into it, every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder; fill it up with the best bones. 5. Take only the best sheep, and lay a pile of

[1] Smend has B.C. 587 for the fall of the city. Most say B.C. 588.
[2] 2 Kings xxv. 1. Jer. lii. 4; xxxix. 1. Zech. viii. 19.
[3] Ezek. xi. 3-7. [4] Ezek. xi. 7-11. [5] **Ezek. xxiv. 1-5.**

wood under it; let it boil well, that the bones in it may be thoroughly seethed.

"6. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[1] Woe to the city of blood! to the cauldron full inside with rust; the old rust of which is not cleansed out of it! Take out piece by piece; let no lot be cast (to take one and leave another)! 7. For blood was shed by her, in her midst. She let it flow on the naked rock (where it lies uncovered, calling for vengeance); she did not let it run on the ground, that it might be hidden (from the eyes of God) by the dust.[2] 8. To rouse fury and kindle revenge, I have let the blood shed in her be thus poured out on the naked rock, that it might not be covered!

"9. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the city of blood! I will make the pile of faggots under thee great. 10. Heap on wood, fan up the fire; make ready the flesh, boil well the broth, let the bones be burnt! 11. Then set the empty cauldron on the coals, that its brass may be hot and glowing, that its filthiness may be melted in it, that the rust may be consumed. 12. With weary toil has Jehovah laboured, but in vain; its thick rust has not been cleansed from it; let the fire burn the rust! 13. Because of thy filthy lewdness; because, though I would have made thee clean, thou wouldst not be made so, thou shalt be no more clean till I have poured out my wrath upon thee. 14. I, Jehovah, have spoken it; it shall come to pass; I will do it; I will not go back from it;[3] I will not spare or shew pity. According to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall I[4] judge thee, saith Jehovah Adonai."

Hitherto, Ezekiel, though forced to refrain from speaking in public, by the hostility of his fellow-captives, had had the unspeakable consolation of a happy home. His wife, the desire of his eyes, made sunshine to him under his humble roof, if there were clouds and darkness outside.

[1] **Ezek. xxiv. 6-20.**

[2] The Bedouin are still careful to cover even a few drops of blood, from any one, with dust. This is in harmony with Oriental feeling, expressed frequently in the Scriptures. See Num. xxxv. 33; Lev. xvii. 13. If hidden from sight, blood seen by God or man would not bring down punishment on him who shed it, if it was from homicide or wilful injury, and would prevent the horrors of blood revenge. There is much interesting information on this subject in Neil's *Pictured Palestine*, an excellent collection of Bible illustrations, gathered during long residence in the Holy Land.

[3] Gesenius, "absolve" the guilty.

[4] Septuagint, and all versions.

But whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and his faithful prophet was no exception to the universal rule. The same day on which he uttered these last words over the guilty and doomed Jerusalem, the very day on which its siege, afar off, began, was memorable to him on a sadder ground. His address having closed, and his audience having left his chamber, the little heaven of his private life, hitherto so unclouded, was in a moment darkened. An intimation, communicated we know not how, that his wife was to die suddenly, chilled his soul. The light of his life was not to wane by a slow setting, but to go down at midday, leaving him without his one comforter and friend! Nor was even this all. He was told that to make this terrible sorrow a lesson to the community around, no customary sounds of loud wailing were to rise from his dwelling; he was not, like others, to mourn for the loved one by uncovering the head and strewing ashes on it;[1] or to go barefooted;[2] or to put on black sackcloth, or to cover his face to the mouth, as others did,[3] as a sign that he wished to be left in silence; or even to eat the food brought on such occasions by relations and friends.[4] On the contrary, he was to put on his turban—the usual head-dress of a priest;[5] to wear his sandals, and his ordinary dress; to refrain from covering his lips with his robe; to eat every-day food and not that of mourners; to bear himself, in short, as if the calamity were too overpowering to be expressed by the common symbols of grief.

He had spoken in the morning to the people who had come to him, and then all had been well in his lowly

[1] Isa. lxi. 3. Lev. xxi. 10.
[2] 2 Sam. xv. 30. Isa. xx. 2.
[3] Mic. iii. 7. Lev. xiii. 45. Jer. viii. 21. Job ii. 12, 13.
[4] 2 Sam. iii. 35. Deut. xxvi. 14. Hos. ix. 4. Jer. xvi. 7.
[5] Ezek. xliv. 18. Exod. xxxix. 28.

home; but the evening fell on the pale face of his dead wife.

Yet Ezekiel, strong-minded, and nobly acquiescent in the good pleasure of Jehovah, even when it demanded most at his hands, appeared next morning, as he had been directed, without any display of the emblems of sorrow. No cries of lament rose from his desolated home; he sought no seclusion. Sympathizers, flocking to condole with him, and to pay the wonted rites to the dead, were confounded. What did he mean? He was a prophet; his action was no doubt designed. How could he thus shock public feeling?

"XXIV. 21. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] answered the heart-broken man, Behold, I am about to profane My Sanctuary, your greatest pride and the desire of your eyes, and the delight of your soul;[2] and your sons and your daughters, whom you have left (behind you in Judah), will fall by the sword. 22. But (when all this shall have happened) ye shall do as I have done (now, in my great sorrow). You will not cover your lips[3] with your mantle, nor eat the bread of mourning. 23. Your turbans will be on your heads, and your sandals on your feet, as at other times; you will make no loud lamentation nor weep, but you will be overpowered (by such a penalty) for your sins, and shall moan to each other (in speechless grief). 24. Thus, Ezekiel is a sign to you (in his present action). You (yourselves) will do, in that day, as he is doing now, and when this happens you shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah!"

The fall of Jerusalem had been the great event to which all Ezekiel's predictions had pointed, and would be a complete vindication of his high commission as a true prophet. His opponents would be silenced, and no further hindrance on their part, to his free speech, would be possible. The news brought by one who had escaped from the final

[1] **Ezek. xxiv. 21-24.** [2] Mic. iii. 11. Jer. vii. 14.
[3] Literally, "beard."

slaughter of the storming would be the overthrow of those opposed to him, and would establish his prophetic authority.

"25. Verily, O son of man,[1] on that day when I take from them (the temple, which was) their confidence, their supreme boast, the desire of their eyes and the delight of their souls—(when I take from them, also,) their sons and their daughters; 26. in that day will one that has escaped, come to thee, to tell the (awful) tidings in thine ears. 27. Then, in that day, thy mouth (so long sealed) will be opened like that of the fugitive, and thou shalt speak (as a prophet to the people), and no more (be forced to) keep silence, and thou wilt be (seen to have been) a sign to them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah!"

[1] **Ezek. xxiv. 25-27.**

CHAPTER IV.

THE INVESTMENT OF JERUSALEM.

With the twenty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel our information respecting the Hebrew captives on the Chebar ceases for a time, and we have to return to Jerusalem, now closely invested by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, drawn from many subject nations. It would seem, indeed, that contingents had been furnished, at least before the close of the siege, by Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines, while the Phœnicians, if they did not actively aid the Chaldæans, were bitterly hostile to Judah in feeling.[1] So little had come of the projected league of all Palestine against Nebuchadnezzar. His approach had dissolved it, and let loose all the deep-seated hatred towards the Hebrews, which had for a time been dissembled.

The investment of Jerusalem began in the early months of the ninth year of Zedekiah—about December, B.C. 591. As in similar cases, the population had been greatly increased by fugitives from the country round; but large supplies of provisions had been laid in, and the citizens trusted that Pharaoh Hophra, who had just ascended the throne of Egypt,[2] would speedily raise the siege by an army sent to their relief.

The new Pharaoh was, indeed, a man from whom much might be hoped. Fond of war and impatient of a quiet

[1] Ezek. xxv. and xxvi. [2] Lenormant says in B.C. 589. Brugsch, in B.C. 591.

life, he was a great patron of the mercenary Greek soldiers who, under captains of their own race, hired themselves, like the free lances of the Middle Ages, to any prince willing to engage them. Hophra made Egypt more than ever their richest harvest-ground, and their bands formed the strength of his army. His father's successful campaign against Nubia shewed that, since the great disaster of Carchemish, the country had regained its military spirit. Yielding to his personal ambition and the counsels of his mercenaries, he resolved to return to the policy of Necho II., and once more attempt the conquest of Syria, now held by the Babylonians. The times seemed propitious. Wearied, as we have seen, of the vassalage to the Chaldæans, all Palestine was ready to rise. In Jerusalem, especially, a strong party had forced Zedekiah into an Egyptian alliance. Trusting to Hophra, all the land was in revolt, a few months after his accession. But Nebuchadnezzar, with the swift decision that marked him, hastened from the Euphrates, by forced marches, on the first report of the rebellion; uncertain which of the petty kingdoms to attack first. To use the language of Ezekiel, he stopped his chariot at the point where the two roads, to Ammon and Jerusalem, branched off, and only decided on taking the latter after consulting his oracles.[1] Jerusalem was the soul of the coalition against him. Its territory united the confederates of the coast to those of the east of Jordan and of the desert, and formed a link between Egypt and southern Syria. One Chaldæan army was sent, therefore, to ravage Phœnicia and commence the blockade of Tyre, while Nebuchadnezzar himself turned, with the bulk of his troops, against Jerusalem. Not daring to oppose such a force in

[1] Ezek. xxi. 21.

the open field, Zedekiah forthwith shut himself up in his capital, and the siege began. Judah had been spared twice before, but the Chaldæan was now resolved to destroy it. That its king, whom he had raised to the throne, should have perjured himself, after having sworn by his own God, and that his people, though weakened by the exile of the leading spirits of the kingdom, should have proved so resolutely troublesome, determined Nebuchadnezzar to use the harshest measures. He therefore desolated the country at his leisure, delivering his captives to the cruel mercies of the Philistines and Edomites, and appeared, at last, on the north plateau of Jerusalem, only after he had laid waste the whole land with fire and sword.[1]

Under these circumstances, the credit of Jeremiah as a true prophet necessarily increased, till even the vacillating Zedekiah,—breaking loose for a moment from his counsellors,[2] and imitating the example of Hezekiah, who consulted Isaiah, the great prophet of that day, in a time of similar peril,[3]—deigned to send two of his officials, Pashur and Zephaniah, priests of high rank,[4] but of the Egyptian faction, and thus opposed to Jeremiah in politics,[5] humbly "to enquire of Jehovah," through him, respecting the future.[6] The envoys found the seer in the temple; but his answer to them was dispiriting in the extreme. The king should hear the truth, however painful. Shut up in the city, without the possibility of escape, how few men would have taken their lives in their hands, by braving the

[1] Lenormant, *Hist. Ancienne de l'Orient*, p. 492. Maspero, p. 500.
[2] Jer. xxi. 1, 2. [3] 2 Kings xix. 2.
[4] 1 Chron. xxiv. 9. Malchiah, the father of this Pashur, was head of the fifth course; Zephaniah was the deputy high priest. He is often mentioned, and was at last slain by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. See Jer. xxix. 25; xxxvii. 3; lii. 24. Another Pashur is mentioned in Jer. xx. 1. [5] Jer. xxxviii. 1, 4.
[6] Jer. xxi. 1, 2. See the parallel cases of Hezekiah and Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 13.

anger of a despot and his court, through whom he had already suffered much. But Jeremiah knew no fear when he had to speak for God.

To the question whether the king of Babylon would be driven away from Jerusalem by a miracle, like that by which the city had been saved from Sennacherib, in the reign of Hezekiah, he forthwith replied:

"XXI. 4. Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel,[1] Behold (instead of turning back the weapons of war in the hands of the Chaldæans), I will turn back those in your own hands, with which you fight (from the walls) against the king of Babylon and the Chaldæans, who besiege you outside, and will bring them in (for a last struggle), to the very heart of this city. 5. I, Myself, also will fight against you, with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, in anger, and fury, and fierce wrath. 6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, man and beast; they shall die by a sore pestilence. 7. And afterwards, says Jehovah, I will deliver Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his servants (the court), and the people left in this city from the pestilence, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and of them that seek their life, and he will slay them with the edge of the sword: he shall not spare them, nor have pity or mercy."

He then proceeded to point out to the citizens the only means of safety.

"8. As to the people, say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, See, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.[2] 9. He that stays in this city shall die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence. But he that goes out and gives himself up to the Chaldæans, that besiege you, he shall live; his life, but nothing more, will be granted him. 10. For I have set My face against this city, for evil and not for good, says Jehovah; it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire."

Then followed a warning to the royal family.

[1] Jer. xxi. 4–10. [2] Deut. xxx. 19.

"11. And as to the house of the king of Judah,[1] hear the word of Jehovah: 12. O house of David (king and royal family together), thus saith Jehovah, Do your duty (as your forefathers did,[2] by sitting in the gate of the city) every morning, to do justice (as the judges of the people), and to snatch the man that is being plundered from the hand of his oppressor; that My fury may not burst out against you like fire, and burn unquenchably, because of the evil of your doings!"

Jerusalem, as a whole, has roused the anger of God.

"13. Behold, I am against thee, O Jerusalem, inhabitress of the valley (beneath the temple), and of the (table-land) rock[3] (beyond),[4] saith Jehovah—who says to herself—'who shall come down against us? Who shall enter our (secure) retreats?' 14. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith Jehovah; and I will kindle a fire in the forest-(like dwellings) of your city, and it will devour everything round it."[5]

Then followed a final command to take a message to the king personally.

"XXII. 1. Thus saith Jehovah, Go down to the palace of the king of Judah, and speak this word there, 2. and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, O king of Judah, that sittest on the throne of David—thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter by these (temple?) gates: 3. Thus saith Jehovah, Execute justice and righteousness (as supreme judge of the state), and snatch the man that is being plundered, from the hand of the oppressor; and do not (yourself) oppress, or do violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood

[1] **Jer. xx. 11-14; xxii. 1-3.** [2] 2 Sam. xv. 2-4.

[3] Literally, "the rock of the Mishor." Mishor is the name for the smooth upland downs of Moab (Deut. iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 17; xx. 8; Jer. xlviii. 8, 21). Derived from the root *yashar*, "even, level, plain," it naturally came to be used figuratively for equity, right, righteous, and uprightness (Mal. ii. 6; Isa. xi. 4; Ps. xlv. 7; lxvii. 4; cxliii. 10), and thus the name was equivalent to "the rock of justice, righteousness or equity"—a name on which the people prided themselves.

[4] On all sides except the north, Jerusalem is surrounded by valleys, and the valley between Zion and Moriah, as well as other parts of the city, made it, still more, an "inhabitress of the valley," while the table-land to the north, connecting the city with the country beyond, was, probably, more or less covered with houses.

[5] The word used for "forest" is *yaar*, or "scrub." Portions of this are even now constantly set on fire by the charcoal burners, who thus often burn down a whole hill-side.

in this place! 4. For if you really act thus,[1] kings sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, shall pass through the gates of this palace—they and their servants and their people. 5. But if you will not hear these words, I swear by Myself, says Jehovah, that this house, the temple, shall become a desolation!

"6. For thus saith Jehovah, to the house of the king of Judah: Thou (Jerusalem) art to Me as the (rich) Gilead and as the head of Lebanon; yet, surely, I will make thee desolate, like cities that are deserted. 7. I will set apart destroyers against thee, every one with his weapon, and they will cut down thy best cedars, and throw them on the fire. 8. And many peoples will pass by this city, and say each to the other, 'Why has Jehovah done thus to this great city?' 9. And they will answer, 'Because they forsook the covenant of Jehovah, their God, and worshipped and served foreign gods!'"[2]

The sins of the kings had been too surely one of the causes of the ruin of his country to permit Jeremiah to spare the throne in his preaching. Yet the glorious anticipation of the advent of a great king lighted up the future; and while he felt compelled sternly to denounce the rulers of his own and of past days, he was too true a patriot, and too zealous for the final triumph of the kingdom of God, to keep back this cheering prospect.

"XXIII. 1. Woe to the shepherds[3]—he cried about this time—who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! saith Jehovah. 2. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, respecting the shepherds that feed My people: Ye have scattered and driven away My flock, and have not given heed to them. Behold, I will visit on you the evil of your doings, saith Jehovah. 3. But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and bring them back again to their pastures, and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4. And I will set up shepherds over them who shall

[1] **Jer. xxii. 4–9.** The rest of the chapter is given at vol. v. pp. 339, 348, 349. It is apparently of an earlier date than these verses.

[2] There never were cedars in Jerusalem, but the prophet is thinking of Lebanon, of which he has just spoken, and transfers its glory, in imagination, to the doomed city. Gilead was the ideal of pastoral wealth, Lebanon of majesty, with its cedars and its snowy crest.

[3] Kings. **Jer. xxiii. 1–4.**

feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor be lost, saith Jehovah! 5. Behold the days come,[1] saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, who will rule as King, and act wisely, and execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved (from her enemies), and Israel dwell in security, and this is the name by which he shall be called—'Jehovah our Righteousness.'[2] 7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, 'By the life of Jehovah, who brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt,' 8. but 'By the life of Jehovah, who brought up, and led, the seed of the house of Israel, from the land of the North, and from all lands whither I have driven them,' and they shall dwell in their own land."

Next to the bad kings, the bad prophets had been the main cause of the ruin of the country. These, therefore, Jeremiah fitly passes on to denounce.

"9. My heart within me is broken, all my bones shake[3] (for terror): I am like one drunk, like a man overpowered by wine, because of Jehovah and His holy words. 10. For the land is full of adulterers; yea, the land withers under a curse; the pastures of the wilderness dry up, for the conduct[4] of the people is evil; they are strong, not to do right, but to do wrong! 11. For both prophet and priest are unholy. Even in My own house, (the temple), have I found their wickedness, saith Jehovah. 12. Therefore, their way will be slippery to them in the darkness[5] that is coming; they shall be driven on and fall in it. For I will bring evil upon them, the year of their punishment, says

[1] **Jer. xxiii. 5-12.**

[2] Bishop Thirlwall proposes that this be read, "Jehovah *is* our Righteousness," from the analogy of Jehovah Shammah=Jehovah *is* there (Ezek. xlviii. 35. See Thirlwall's *Remains*, vol. iii. p. 471). It would then imply that Jehovah was recognized by him as the object of worship and source and ideal of righteousness, which, with all its blessings, came to His people from Him, alone. Keil, De Wette, and Naegelsbach, pronounce for the name as in the A. V. Ewald, Arnheim, Streane, and Hitzig, for the rendering adopted by Bishop Thirlwall.

[3] Literally, "are loose, or weak." [4] Course.

[5] On the way to Beit Jibrin darkness overtook me. The last part of the road was down a steep hill, by a track as rough and slippery as loose stones in one place, and smooth sheets of rock in another, could make it. It was impossible to guide my horse, so that I could only leave it to itself, trusting its sure-footedness, to take me to the bottom safely, which it did. Such a descent brought forcibly to my mind the words of the prophet: "Their way will be slippery to them in the darkness."

Jehovah. 13. I saw folly[1] among the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in the name of Baal, and led My people Israel astray. 14. But I have seen among the prophets of Jerusalem (also), a horrible thing; they commit adultery,[2] and walk in lies, and strengthen the hands of evil doers, so that no one turns from his evil way; all the people (of Jerusalem) are become to Me as Sodom, all its inhabitants like those of Gomorrah!

"15. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah of Hosts concerning the prophets: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood and give them poison-water to drink,[3] for, from the prophets of Jerusalem, pollution has gone out through the whole land. 16. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They deceive you; they speak a vision of their own inventing;[4] not out of the mouth of Jehovah. 17. They say continually to them that despise Me: 'Jehovah has said, Ye shall have peace,' and to every one who walks in the imagination of his own heart they say: 'No evil shall come upon you.' 18. But who of them has stood in the counsel of Jehovah, to see and hear His Word? Who (of them) has marked and heard His Word?

"19. Behold a whirlwind of Jehovah, a storm of wrath, is gone forth, a rolling hurricane; it shall whirl round the head of the wicked. 20. The wrath of Jehovah will not turn back till He has carried out and performed the thoughts of His heart. At the end of the days ye will understand it perfectly. 21. I have not sent their prophets, yet they ran; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied! 22. But if they had stood in My counsel, they would have caused My people to know My words, that they should turn from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings."

The impossibility of unworthy prophets escaping detection and punishment is evident.

"23. Am I a God (only over what is near) at hand, saith Jehovah, and not (also) a God (who sees) afar off? 24. Can any one hide himself in secret places, so that I shall not see him? saith Jehovah. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says Jehovah. 25. I have heard what the prophets say, who prophesy lies in My name, saying, 'I have dreamed,

[1] **Jer. xxiii. 13-25.** The word means "tasteless, unsalted," hence "irrational."

[2] Idolatry.

[3] See vol. v. pp. 187, 190. See also Jer. viii. 14.

[4] Literally, "heart."

I have dreamed.' 26. How long will it be in the hearts of the prophets to prophesy lies, and to be prophets of falsehood of their own invention ?[1] 27. They think they will make My people forget My name, through their dreams,[2] which they tell each to the other, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal. 28. Let the prophet who really has a dream (from Me) tell it; let him who has received a word from Me, speak it exactly. What has straw to do with wheat ? (why do they mix lies with My truth ?) saith Jehovah ! 29. Is not My word like a fire; does it not break in pieces the heart as a hammer breaks in pieces the rock ?[3]

"30. Therefore, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, that steal My word one from the other. 31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, who use their tongues, and (without authority from Me) say 'He saith.'[4] 32. Thus saith Jehovah : Behold, I am against those that prophesy lying dreams, and repeat them, and lead astray My people by their lies, and by their boasting (of communications from Me). Yet I did *not* send or commission them, and they are no good whatever to this people, saith Jehovah.

"33. And if this people, or one of these (unworthy) prophets, or (base) priests, ask you : 'What burden[5] have you received from Jehovah to-day ?' say to them: 'What burden have I received (to-day) ? This: I will cast you off (as an intolerable burden), says Jehovah.'[6] 34. And the prophet, the priest, and the people who talk lightly of 'The burden of Jehovah,' I will punish that man and his house.

[1] Heart. **Jer. xxiii. 26-34.**

[2] There were, thus, some true prophetic dreams, sent from Jehovah. Num. xii. 6. 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. 1 Kings iii. 5. Job iv. 13 ; vii. 14 ; xxxiii. 15. Joel ii. 28. The dreams meant here, are pretended dreams, published as sent from Jehovah or from idols, and interpreted by heathen methods. In this case the pretending dreamer and interpreter were to be stoned. Deut. xiii. 2-12. See Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 147.

[3] Eichhorn. "Let the prophet who has a dream tell it as a dream ; and let him who has My word repeat it exactly. What has straw to do among corn ? says Jehovah. Does not My word burn like fire ? Does it not break in pieces the heart as the iron hammer does the rocks ?"

[4] It is striking to notice how the bitter divisions of the day united the most opposite parties against the old national faith. The aristocracy found themselves supported in their heathen and Egyptian bias by the bulk of the priests, and even of the prophets, who, as an order, were the natural antagonists of the moribund priesthood.

[5] The Hebrew word is *Massa*. For its meaning, see vol. v. p. 384.

[6] Or, "Ye are the burden, saith Jehovah." This reading is obtained from another division of the words in the Hebrew, without any change of letters.

35. Ye shall speak thus,[1] each to his neighbour, and each to his brother: 'What has Jehovah answered? and what has Jehovah said?' 36. But ye shall no more use the phrase, 'Burden of Jehovah,' for it shall itself be a burden (of guilt to every man who uses it), for ye misuse and pervert the words of the living God, Jehovah of Hosts, our God, (of which this phrase is one). 37. You shall say also to the prophet, 'What has Jehovah answered thee? and what has Jehovah said?' 38. But if you speak of 'The burden of Jehovah,' thus saith Jehovah: Because you use this phrase, 'The burden of Jehovah' (in ridicule of His true prophets), and I have sent to you, saying, 'You shall not say, "The burden of Jehovah,"' 39. I, even I, will take you up as My burden, and cast both you, and the city which I gave to you and your fathers, far from My sight, 40. and bring everlasting shame on you, and perpetual undying contempt."

The message sent to the king closes with a parabolic vision, like that seen by the prophet Amos.[2] The date at which it was first spoken is stated to have been some time after Nebuchadnezzar had carried off King Jehoiachin and the chief men of the nation, with the carpenters, smiths, and other artisans of Jerusalem, as prisoners, to Babylon. The population left in the city fancied they had been spared as better than those so heavily punished; but Jeremiah tells them that the very reverse was the fact. He saw in spirit, two baskets of figs set before the temple;[3] one specially good, like the delicate June fruit which anticipated the harvest in August;[4] the other so bad as to be uneatable[5]—and he recognized in the two a striking picture of the true condition of the kingdom. On the one side, the young king, full of promise, had been led off into captivity with the noblest, bravest, and most useful men of the city. The hope of the future rested on these. On

[1] **Jer. xxiii. 35–40.** [2] Amos viii. 1–3. [3] Jer. xxiv. 1–3.
[4] Isa. xxviii. 4. Hos. ix. 10. Mic. vii. 1. Nah. iii. 12.
[5] The bad figs may have been those of the sycamore, which contain a bitter juice, or they may have been decayed or rotten. Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 399.

the other hand, there was the weak vassal-king Zedekiah, with the feeble and corrupt remnant of the population left behind; untaught by the terrible lesson of the fall of their brethren, and unteachable. Some of the choicest spirits of the nation were now on the banks of the Chebar—such as Daniel, his three companions, and the prophet Ezekiel—and they would kindle a better life in their fellow-captives. But in Jerusalem there was no such prospect of spiritual revival. The word of Jehovah, that accompanied the vision, ran as follows:

"XXIV. 5. Thus saith Jehovah,[1] the God of Israel: As one looks with pleasure on good fruit (and guards and preserves it), so will I look for their good upon the captives of Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldæans. 6. For I will set My eyes on them for their good, and will bring them back again to this land, and I will build them up and not destroy them; I will plant them and not pluck them up. 7. And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Jehovah; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

"8. And as men throw away bad, uneatable figs, verily, so, says Jehovah, will I treat Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his princes, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and those that remain in this land, and also those dwelling in the land of Egypt. 9. I will make them an object of shuddering pity, and give them up to calamity in all kingdoms of the earth; and will make them a contempt, a byword, a mockery, and the butt of cursing, in all places whither I drive them. 10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence upon them, till they are wholly consumed from off the land that I gave to them and to their fathers."

The moral corruption and social anarchy of Jerusalem must have been extreme, to call forth such denunciations from one of its own citizens; a man not censorious or cynical, but full of tender loyalty to his fellow-countrymen. But amidst all this evil there were still some of

[1] Jer. xxiv. 5-10.

"the poor" and "meek" of the land, who clung to the religion of their fathers, and yearned for the revival of faith in Jehovah and obedience to His law. With them, among the remnant in Judah, lay the future of the Church of God. They were the true Israel, and, as such, Jehovah was mindful of His covenant with their fathers. To sustain them amidst the gloom, around and before them, an assurance of the certain realization of the Divine promises was only what might be expected from the gracious God whom they so faithfully served. Jeremiah, as the centre of this feeble brotherhood, felt his warmest sympathies drawn out towards them, and gladly turned aside from his terrible condemnations, to announce the future salvation prepared by God for His true people, after they had been purified by exile. The whole chosen race, so far as it returned to its allegiance to Jehovah, would, one day, be restored. They would come back to their own land, and a new spiritual covenant, written, not on tables of stone, but on their hearts, would be made with them, and they would forget their past misery. Jeremiah was, therefore, commanded to write in a book "all the words" which Jehovah thus condescended to communicate for the comfort of His hidden ones; "For, lo,"[1] He said, "the days come that I will bring back again the captivity of My people Israel, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

The consolation thus graciously vouchsafed, is thrown, in its introductory sentences, into a dramatic form,[2] for greater effect. A future generation is pictured as hearing, from afar, the bitter cry of the exiles, amidst the judgments on the heathen around them, and Jehovah is intro-

[1] Jer. xxx. 1–3.

[2] Jer. xxx. 4–7.

duced as ministering words of cheer to them, by a promise of their future deliverance.

"XXX. 5. (*The people:*)[1] We hear the cry of terror and dismay, and, as yet, there is no deliverance! 6. (*The prophet:*) Ask and see. A man cannot bear a child; why then such wails, like those of a woman in trouble? Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in her pain, and all faces turned pale? 7. (*The people:*) Alas, for that day of Jehovah, often predicted! The day of His judgments is great; it is a time of distress to Jacob. (*Jehovah:*) But he shall be saved from it."

The great theme of the discourse—the deliverance from exile—now begins.

"8. In that day, says Jehovah, I will break the yoke (of the king of Babylon) from off thy neck (O Israel), and burst asunder thy bonds, and aliens shall no longer make thee their servant. 9. But Israel shall be the servant of Jehovah, his God, and of David, his king, whom I will raise up to him.[2]

"10. Therefore, fear thou not, O My servant Jacob, saith Jehovah, and be not dismayed, O Israel; for, lo, I will save thee from the far-distant land (of thy exile), and thy children from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return, and rest in peace, no one disturbing him. 11. For I am with thee, says Jehovah, to save thee; for I shall make an utter end of the nations among which I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; yet I will chastise thee according to justice, for I cannot leave thee unpunished. 12. For, thus saith Jehovah, thy wound is past healing; the blow that has struck thee is desperate. 13. No one cares for thy state; thou hast no medicines for thy sore, to press it together, or bind it, or any plaster. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they do not ask after thee; for I have

[1] **Jer. xxx. 5-14.**

[2] The expected deliverer is spoken of as David in other passages. See Ezek. xxxiv. 23; xxxvii. 24. Hos. iii. 5. From this, and similar passages, the Rabbis invented a doctrine of a double Messiah—temporal and spiritual. Buxtorff, *Lex.*, p. 1273. Oehler, in Herzog, vol. ix. p. 440. But see Hengstenberg's *Christol.*, 2te Auf., p. 471. Did the fancy run through the Jewish mind, that David would return in person? A fond hope of such a reappearance of popular heroes, has marked every age. Barbarossa, and even Napoleon, were eagerly expected, long after their death, to come back again, and take their place as leaders of the world.

struck thee down with the blow of an enemy, with bitter chastisement, for the multitude of thy transgressions—for thy sins were many."

Judah and Jerusalem are now specially addressed.

"15. Why criest thou out for thy sufferings?[1] Because thy punishment is terrible? I have done these things to thee for the multitude of thy transgressions, for thy sins were many. 16. (But, because I have pity upon thee,) therefore all that devour thee shall (themselves) be devoured; all thy oppressors, every one of them, shall go into captivity; they that plundered thee shall themselves be spoiled, and all who have robbed thee will I give as a prey (to robbers). 17. And I will lay a healing plaster on thy wound, and heal thee of the blows thou hast received, saith Jehovah, because they call thee an 'Outcast,' —'Zion, whom no man asks after.'"

Jerusalem shall be in favour with God, and shall prosper.

"18. Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will turn again the captivity of the tents of Jacob, and have mercy on his dwelling-places, and Jerusalem shall be rebuilt on its own hill,[2] and the palace be inhabited by a king in royal state.[3] 19. And out of the tents (of Jacob and the chambers of the palace) shall rise thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry, and I will multiply them, and they shall not be diminished, and I will bring them to honour, and they shall no longer be lightly regarded. 20. Their sons shall flourish as in times of old, and their community[4] be firmly established, and I will punish all that would oppress them. 21. And their king will come forth from their own race, their ruler from the midst of themselves; they will no more serve the foreigner: and I will bring him near and allow him freely to approach Me, (a favour permitted to no one else). For who would risk his life by approaching Me? 22. Thus will you be My people, and I will be your God."

[1] **Jer. xxx. 15-22.**

[2] One of the words in the Hebrew for "hill," is *Tel*. It often forms part of the name of a city, as in Telassar, Thelassar (2 Kings xix. 12; Isa. xxxvii. 12), Tel Haresha=Tel Harsa, and Tel Melah (Ezra ii. 59; Neh. vii. 61), Tel Abib (Ezek. iii. 15). Most Eastern cities were built on eminences, to protect them from inundation and against the foe.

[3] Literally, "after its manner."

[4] Congregation.

The wicked, however, will be consumed in the flames of God's wrath.

"23. Behold, there comes a tempest from Jehovah,[1] a bursting forth of wrath; a sweeping hurricane will whirl round the heads of the wicked. 24. The fierce indignation of Jehovah will not turn aside, till He has finished and carried out the thought of His heart. At the end of days ye will understand this!"

This storm of wrath against the enemies of Israel will at once prove God to be the God of His people, and will bring about the deliverance and reassembling of all its twelve tribes as one nation.

"XXXI. 1. At the same time, says Jehovah, will I be the God of all the twelve tribes of Israel, and they shall be My people. 2. Thus saith Jehovah, The remnant of the nation which has escaped from the sword has found grace in the wilderness. Israel is now coming to its rest![2] 3. (It now says in its penitence,) 'Jehovah appeared from afar—from Zion—unto me.' (Let Me therefore tell its sons,) I have indeed loved thee, Israel, with an everlasting love, therefore have I continued My lovingkindness to thee. 4. I will (further) build thee (up again), and thou shalt remain prosperous,[3] O Virgin of Israel. Thou shalt again ornament thy timbrels,[4] and go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5. Thou shalt yet plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria, and they that plant them shall gather their fruit. 6. For the day is coming when the watchmen on the mountains of Ephraim (shall announce the new moons that proclaim the approach of the great yearly feasts, and) shall call out—'Up! let us go up to Mount Zion, to Jehovah, our God!'

"7. For thus saith Jehovah: Sing for gladness about Jacob! Shout

[1] **Jer. xxx. 23, 24; xxxi. 1-7.**

[2] Ewald refers this to the favour shewn Israel after its escape from Egypt. Others think it is spoken of the remnant of the tribes who have survived the Assyrian captivity. But Babylon, or Assyria, was a wilderness to the fancy of the Jew, compared with his own land. The explanations of the last clause are numerous. I have given what seems to me the best translation.

[3] Hebrew, "built."

[4] Hebrew, *toph;* Arabian, *duff*, or *diff;* our tambourine. See "timbrel" and "tabret," in *Concordance.*

(for joy) about her that was the chief of the nations!' Sing aloud, and cry to God, 'Jehovah, save Thy people! the remnant of Israel!' 8. (Then will come His gracious answer:) Behold,[2] I will bring them from the land of the North, and gather them from the farthest sides of the earth—the blind and the lame (as well as the strong); the woman with child, and she that is about to bring forth, together. A great community are they as they return! 9. They will come with weeping and with supplications, as I lead them. I will guide them to streams of water, by a smooth path, on which they will not stumble, for I will be a Father to Israel, and Ephraim shall be My first-born.

"10. Hear the word of Jehovah, O ye nations, and tell it to the farthest coasts and islands, and say: 'He that scattered Israel will gather him, and will guard him as a shepherd doth his flock.' 11. For Jehovah has redeemed Jacob,[3] and ransomed him from the hand that was stronger than he, 12. and they will come and sing on the height of Zion, and stream to the blessings of Jehovah (which He shall give them in the fatherland)—to the wheat, and to the wine, and to the oil, and to the young sheep and oxen; and their soul shall be as a garden rich in waters, and they shall not droop or pine away any more. 13. Then shall the virgin enjoy herself in the dance;[4] young men and old will rejoice together; and I will turn their mourning into joy, and comfort them, and make them glad, after their sorrow. 14. And I will satiate[5] the priests with fatness,[6] and My people will be satisfied with My bounty, saith Jehovah."

An exquisite passage now comes, in which the prophet introduces the long dead Rachel, the mother of Joseph, and, through him, of the great tribe of Ephraim, Joseph's son, on whose head the right hand of the patriarch Jacob, the father of the nation, had been laid, to mark him, authoritatively, as the heir of Joseph's supremacy over his brethren, a dignity never contested except by Judah, which sat moodily apart, on its bare hills, in envious and feeble isolation. She is seen, far from her Bethlehem grave, at

[1] Amos vi. 1. Ezek. xix. 5. [2] **Jer. xxxi. 8-14.** [3] The Ten Tribes.
[4] The maidens danced by themselves. [5] Literally, "water or refresh."
[6] The number of the finest beasts offered as sacrifices will be very numerous, so that the share of the priests and their families—the wave breast and heave shoulder (Lev. vii. 31-34)—will more than supply them.

Ramah, the lofty hill on the boundary between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, whence she could look over the now desolate home of her northern children, and, as their mother, lament their loss. But Jehovah Himself comforts her as she weeps. Let Israel repent of his sins, and he will surely return.

"15. Thus saith Jehovah:[1] A voice is heard in Ramah,[2] loud cries of sorrow and bitter weeping. Rachel weeps over her children and refuses to be comforted, because they are not."

But Jehovah appears to console and cheer her.

"16. Thus saith Jehovah: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thou shalt still have a reward of thy (motherly sorrow and) care, (thou guide of the youth of Joseph—thou who gavest thy life to give Benjamin his—thou who didst so yearn for children); thy sons shall come back again from the land of the enemy. 17. There is hope for thy future, saith Jehovah; thy sons shall return to their own borders!"

Repentance is needed on the part of Israel, to secure its deliverance from captivity; but this is not wanting.

"18. I have assuredly heard Ephraim lamenting his sins: 'Thou hast chastised me,' said he. 'I received correction like an ox unbroken; turn me, that I may turn, for Thou, Jehovah, art my God. 19. For after I had turned away from Thee I repented; and after I came to my right mind I smote on my thigh (for grief at my sin); I blush and am ashamed that I should bear such reproach (for the guilt) of my youth.'"

At this confession of sin by Ephraim, the old love of Jehovah for him rekindles.

"20. Is Ephraim, then, (once more) a dear son (to Me)? Is he a son I delighted to caress? For, often as I spoke against him, I still thought

[1] Jer. xxxi. 15-20.

[2] Now Er Ram, five English miles north of Jerusalem. It is on the top of a detached hill commanding a wide view to the north.

of him fondly. Therefore, My heart sighs for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith Jehovah."

Preparations for his safe return across the wilderness, from Assyria to Palestine, are therefore to be made.

"21. Set up stones to mark the way;[1] raise built-up stones to point it out: turn thy thoughts to the road thou hast to take: the same road by which thou wast led (into captivity): return, O Virgin of Israel, return to these thy towns! 22. How long wilt thou hesitate (to take the right way), O backsliding daughter? For Jehovah has created a new thing in the earth. (It is the part of a man—the stronger—to protect and care for the woman; but) thou, the woman (the bride of Jehovah), wilt (be allowed to) protect Me (by protecting My temple, My worship, and My honour)."[2]

Judah, also, shall be restored from captivity.

"23. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: They shall again use this speech in the land of Judah, and in its towns, when I bring back their captivity: 'Jehovah bless thee, O habitation of righteousness; thou holy mount!'[3] 24. And therein will all Judah dwell, with all the population of its towns; some as husbandmen, some going forth with flocks. 25. For I will refresh the weary soul, and satisfy him that languishes."

The prophet had seen and heard all this while in a sleep-like trance,[4] but the joy it gave him broke the spell, and he now awakes and sees things around, as one restored to his normal state. No wonder that he adds, "My sleep was sweet unto me." But, ere long, his thoughts fell back to the same train, and the happy future of Judah and Israel, as a nation once more united, rose in vision before him.

"27. Behold, the days come (said the heavenly Voice), when I will sow the house of Israel, and the house of Judah (as if they were a fruit-

[1] **Jer. xxxi. 21-27.**

[2] See on this explanation, Keil, *Jeremiah*, pp. 331-2. A great variety of opinions may be read in Rosenmüller, *Scholia*, *ad. loc.* "To compass" = to cherish and protect.

[3] **The land of Judah.**

[4] **Jer. xxxi. 26.**

ful field), with the seed of man and with the seed of cattle. 28. And as I have been wakeful over them,[1] to pluck up and root out, to destroy, and consume, and harm, so will I be wakeful over them to build and to plant, saith Jehovah."

There will, then, be no longer the disposition to blame the sins of the fathers and overlook their own, as the cause of all they have suffered in exile.

"29. In those days they will no longer say (as ye do constantly now), 'The fathers ate sour grapes and the teeth of the sons are set on edge.'[2] 30. But every one shall die (only) for his own sins; every man who eats sour grapes, *his* teeth (only) shall be set on edge."

A community thus realizing the responsibility of its members for their spiritual condition and acts, would necessarily be actuated by a higher motive than the mere wish to honour God by outward service. Grateful for His restoring them to their own land, obedience to Him would be a willing homage of love. A New Covenant, written, not, like the former, on tables of stone, but on the "fleshy tables of the heart," would, therefore, be made with them by Jehovah.

"31. Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, when I shall make a new Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32. not like the Covenant I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand, to lead them out from the land of Egypt; which, My Covenant, they have broken, though I had become their husband,[3] saith Jehovah.

"33. But *this* is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith Jehovah; I will put[4] my law[5] in their inmost parts, and write it on their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34. And they will no longer (need to)

[1] **Jer. xxxi. 28-34.** [2] Ezek. xviii. 2. See page 20.

[3] The word in the Hebrew means to become their "lord," or "husband." It is used in the same sense in Gen. xx. 3; Deut. xxi. 13, xxii. 22, xxiv. 1; Isa. lxii. 4, 5, liv. 1, 5; Jer. iii. 14; Mal. ii. 11. In 1 Chron. iv. 22, and Isa. xxvi. 13, it is rendered "to have dominion over." [4] Literally, "give." [5] Torah.

teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know Jehovah;' for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest, saith Jehovah; and I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." [1]

The covenant made at Sinai, written on stone, had been instituted amidst every circumstance of awe, and hence, fear, rather than love, had been associated with its ob-



Ancient Sepulchres in the Valley of Hinnom.

servance. But the New Covenant, written on the heart, would rest on love; and holy love is, like the soul, immortal. The moral nature would, in fact, be renewed, as of old the world had been from chaos, and the laws of the new spiritual creation would prove as permanent and unchanging as those of the material universe.

[1] Gratitude for sin forgiven will lead them to seek to know Jehovah, and will keep them faithful to Him.

"35. Thus saith Jehovah,[1] who appointed the sun for light by day; the ordinances of the moon and stars for light by night; who throws the sea into a commotion so that its waves roar; Jehovah of Hosts is His name: 36. If *these* ordinances fail from before Me, saith Jehovah, so also will the seed of Israel cease to be a nation, before Me, for ever! 37. Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth, beneath, be searched out, I will also reject all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith Jehovah."

Jerusalem would be rebuilt and flourish in those days.

"38. Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that the city (Jerusalem) will be rebuilt for Jehovah, from the Tower of Hananeel[2] to the gate of the corner.[3] 39. And the measuring line will go still farther, straight forward to the hill Gareb,[4] and bend towards Goath.[5] 40. And the whole of (Hinnom,) the valley of corpses[6] and ashes,[7] (defiled, now, as the scene of the horrors of Moloch worship,[8]) and all the space east to the Valley of Kidron, to the corner where the Horse Gate is, towards the east, will be holy to Jehovah, and shall no more be rooted up or destroyed for ever!"

[1] **Jer. xxxi. 35-40.**

[2] At the north-east of the city wall. Neh. iii. 1. Zech. xiv. 10.

[3] At the north-west corner of the town; north or north-west of the present Jaffa Gate. 2 Kings xiv. 13. 2 Chron. xxvi. 9. Zech. xiv. 10.

[4] Gareb = the place of the lepers. An unknown height on the west of the city.

[5] An unknown spot on the south-west of the city. The restored Jerusalem would include spaces lying outside the old city. Goath is called in the Talmud "The heifer's pool."

[6] Carcasses of criminals and of animals were thrown out in the Valley of Hinnom. Contrary to the universally received view, this valley must, in Dr. Sayce's opinion, have been the one known in the time of Josephus as the Tyropœon, or Cheesemakers' Valley. It divided the Temple Hill and the southern hill from the hills on the west, though it is now filled up with the rubbish which the numerous destroyers of Jerusalem have thrown into it. In some places this is more than seventy feet deep, and under it, if anywhere, we must look for the tombs of the kings, that were cut in the rocky cliff of the City of David. Here, too, if anywhere, will be found the relics of the Temple and Palace, that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed. The surface is now covered with crowded and wretched houses, so that excavation on any large scale is impossible. Dr. Sayce's opinion that this part was over the Valley of Hinnom is as startling as it is novel. See his remarks, *Records of the Past*, N. S., vol. i. 174.

[7] Part of the valley was set apart for the mingled ashes and fat of the sacrifices, to consume which an "unquenchable fire" was kept always burning.

[8] **2 Kings xxiii. 10.**

CHAPTER V.

DURING THE SIEGE.

JEREMIAH was fortunate enough to preserve his liberty for some time after the siege had begun, but it was in danger from day to day. Nebuchadnezzar's army, including, besides Chaldæans, contingents from every land subject to him,[1] had full possession of the country outside the gates of Jerusalem, and were besieging not only Jerusalem, but also, at the same time, Lachish and Azekah, fortified towns belonging to Judah, on the Philistine plain.[2] The stubborn tenacity of the capital, however, remained unbroken, and its hope that Egypt would send a force to relieve it was unshaken. Amidst such excitement, to run counter to the popular feeling was dangerous in the extreme, and would have been made an excuse for silence by ordinary men. But Jeremiah knew that resistance was vain, and lost no opportunity of proclaiming this, even to the king in person. Zedekiah had already consulted him, as we have seen, as to the future ; but this did not content the prophet. Seizing opportunities of meeting him, either by penetrating to his chambers in the palace, or when he came abroad, Jeremiah sought, again and again, to warn him of the madness of further resistance.

"Thus saith Jehovah," said he, on one occasion when he had made his way into the royal presence :

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 1. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 1, 7.

"XXXIV. 2. Behold,[1] I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. 3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand; but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon and thy mouth will speak with his mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.[2] 4. Yet, hear the word of Jehovah, O Zedekiah, thou king of Judah. Thus says Jehovah respecting thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword. 5. Thou shalt die in peace, and they will burn spices (at thy burial),[3] as they did at the burial of thy fathers, and they will raise (over thee) the (usual) lament, 'Ah, Lord!'—for I have spoken the word, says Jehovah."

One of the forms of oppression against which Jeremiah and other prophets constantly declaimed, was the retention of free-born Hebrews of both sexes, in slavery, contrary to the law. It was illegal to hold any one as a household slave for more than six years, though field slaves, under special circumstances, might be kept as such till the year of Jubilee.[4] Both classes, however, were to be treated as kindly as if they were hired servants.[5] But the rich men of Jerusalem ignored these provisions of the law, and held numbers of household



ASSYRIAN FUNERAL URNS FOR THE ASHES OF THE DEAD.
From Gosse's *Assyria*.

[1] **Jer. xxxiv. 2-5.** [2] Jer. lii. 11; xxxii. 4. **Ezek. xii. 13.**

[3] It was usual with other nations to burn aromatic perfumes at the burial or burning of great persons. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xii. 18. The Assyrians seem to have in some cases burned the bodies of the dead, but the Hebrews laid them in tombs; the rocky surface of the country, except in the plain of Esdraelon, and a few other spots, making it impossible to dig graves. The custom over all Mesopotamia was to bring the dead, from far and near, to Cutha or Erech, the present Warka, in Southern Babylonia. Warka is, indeed, still the dismal goal of constant caravans of corpses, even from immense distances. [4] **Exod. xxi. 2. Deut. xv. 12.** [5] **Lev. xxv. 39-55.**

servants in perpetual slavery. The imminent danger of the city now, however, for the moment, roused the conscience of the king in favour of these helpless victims. Jeremiah's words had sunk into his heart, and he resolved to take one step, at least, in the right direction, by setting all the Hebrew slaves in Jerusalem free, apparently without regard to the length of time they had served. The need of all possible help in the defence may, perhaps, have been, in part, a consideration, and also, the prudent wish to avert disaffection among the oppressed, when hearty union was so imperative. Amidst the terrors of the siege, therefore, a great assembly of the citizens was held in the temple,[1] and acquiescence in a decree of emancipation wrung from all slaveholders; their formal assent to this reform being solemnly confirmed by a covenant ratified by the usual sacrifices.[2] The decree of enfranchisement was then published, and, even amidst the perils of the hour, the great act of justice spread a momentary gladness through all bosoms.[3]

But reforms carried in a paroxysm of excitement are apt to be short-lived. News reached the Chaldæans, very soon after, that an Egyptian army, destined for the relief of Jerusalem, had invaded the south of Palestine,[4] thus creating a danger to the besiegers which forced them to abandon the investment of the city for a time, and march against the new foe. To lead a large force down the steep and narrow defiles, from the table-land to the coast plains, was no easy matter, however, and secured for the capital a respite of at least two or three months. Roads fit for the passage of an army, or, indeed, for any travelling except on foot or horseback, and this, only slowly and painfully, are even yet unknown in Palestine. If the Chaldæans marched

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 15. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 18. [3] Jer. xxxiv. 8–10. [4] Jer. xxxvii. 5.

south from Jerusalem to Hebron, as their first stage, and then descended to the plains, their most direct route, I can vouch, from my own experience, that their progress must have been indescribably difficult. There is only a narrow path most of the way, and that winds, hither and thither, among loose stones, often on the side of steep hills. To an army, encumbered with its long trains of wagons, military engines, and multitudinous requirements for man and beast, the march must have been a very great undertaking. Hopes forthwith ran high among the citizens, that the disappearance of their assailants was final; the victory of Pharaoh Hophra being confidently assumed. But he was soon driven back to Egypt; if, indeed, as some accounts say, he did not retire at once, without fighting, on the approach of the Chaldæans.

The interval of fancied security was ruinous to Jerusalem. The slaves so lately set at liberty were once more seized, and deprived of their brief freedom.[1] Violence reigned as cruelly as in the worst days of the past. The wildest agitation prevailed. Even a semblance of order could only be maintained by the clubs and spears of the retainers of the slave-holding sheiks. Jerusalem was rent by the bitterest of all feuds, the struggle of a despairing proletariat for its personal liberty. Amidst this fierce uproar and commotion, the voice of Jeremiah, fearless, as always, in defence of the rights of the poor against the injustice of the rich and privileged classes, was heard denouncing the oppressor, and sympathizing with the downtrodden.

"XXXIV. 13. Thus saith Jehovah,[2] the God of Israel,—cried the noble tribune of the people,—I made a Covenant with your fathers in

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 11. [2] Jer. xxxiv. 13.

the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the House of Slaves, saying: 14. At the end of seven years,[1] ye shall set free, every man, his brother Hebrew, who has sold himself to thee; he shall serve thee six years, and then thou shalt let him go free. But your fathers hearkened not to Me, neither inclined their ear. 15. Ye, however, changing this recently, did what was right in My sight; proclaiming liberty, every man, to his neighbour; and made a Covenant (to this effect) before Me, in the House which is called by My name. 16. But ye have now changed (again), and have polluted My name, and have taken back, every one, his man slave, and, every one, his woman slave, whom he had set free of his own will, and have forced them once more into bondage.

"17. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, since ye have not hearkened to Me, by keeping true to your proclamation of liberty to your brothers and neighbours; behold, I now proclaim liberty for you, saith Jehovah; (liberty) to the sword, the pestilence, and the famine (to ravage you); and I give you up to be a shuddering to all the kingdoms of the earth! 18. And I will give the men who have broken My Covenant made of old, and have not kept this (present) one, which (but as yesterday) they swore before Me; cutting a calf in two, and passing between the halves,[2] (to confirm their oath: I will give them), 19. the princes of Judah and of Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the priests, and all the people of the land, 20. into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life, and their dead bodies shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, that seek their life, and into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, which has (for the time) withdrawn from Jerusalem. 22. Behold, I will command, saith Jehovah, and bring them back to this city, to fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the towns of Judah a desolation, without an inhabitant!"

The relief enjoyed by the temporary retirement of the Chaldæans from the siege, however misleading to others

[1] At the end of *six years*. The first and last dates were both reckoned by the Hebrews. Thus the Jubilee was, strictly speaking, the 49th year, not the 50th. So also Circumcision, which was said to be on the eighth day, was, by our way of reckoning, on the seventh; and our Lord's Resurrection, which by the Jewish counting was to take place on the third day, was by ours to be on the second. **Jer. xxxiv. 14-22.**

[2] **Gen. xv. 10.**

as to the final issue of the struggle, did not for a moment change the fixed convictions of Jeremiah. He knew that Egypt would be defeated and ultimately crushed by Nebuchadnezzar, and this he sought to get his fellow-citizens to believe, that they might save at least their lives and the city, by timely submission to the Chaldæans.

The word of Jehovah, he announced, had come to him, saying:

"XLVI. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, publish it in Migdol,[1] make it known in Noph and Tahpanhes![2] Say: Stand forth and prepare thyself, for the sword has devoured (the nations) round about you. 15. Why is (god) Apis, thy Mighty One, overthrown?[3] He could not stand,

[1] **Jer. xlvi. 14-15.**

[2] Migdol, or Magdolon (a military "watch tower"), was twelve miles from Pelusium, or Avaris, the north-east frontier town of Egypt. It lay S.W. from Avaris on the only road. Tahpanhes (see vol. v. p. 138) lay eight or ten miles farther to the S.E. on the same road. Noph, contracted from Menoph, is Memphis, the ancient capital of Lower Egypt. Its ruins lie south of the present Cairo, on the west bank of the Nile. The site of Noph or Memphis shews, now, hardly a trace of the existence of a great city on it in former ages. Indeed, a broken statue of one of the Pharaohs, lying on its face, in a hollow which is filled with water when the Nile overflows, is almost the only visible sign of the ancient grandeur of the spot. The desert sands, however, reaching away interminably from it, cover wondrous memorials of it. Tombs of amazing elaborateness, once rising from the rocky plateau, but long since buried under the drifting desolation, are being constantly disclosed, far and near, while the rock itself has been hollowed into mummy pits for nearly forty miles; each huge pit filled with the dead. The wonderful tombs in which the sacred bulls lie, in almost inconceivably grand sarcophagi, run in a long range underground, each having a spacious chamber to itself and reposing in marble or porphyry, nobler than the last homes of kings. The desert, moreover, is covered, mile after mile, with bits of pottery, in quantities that must be seen to be realized. See vol. ii. p. 15. See also Brugsch's *Map*.

[3] The adjective translated in the A.V. "valiant" is plural, but the verb and the pronouns in the clause are singular. It has hence been thought that the adjective, also, should be singular; the only change needed to make it so being the omission of the letter Yod, the smallest in the Hebrew alphabet, which may have been inserted by a copyist to suit the plural verb, etc. The Septuagint, treating it as singular, refers it to the sacred ox Khaph—Apis or Hapi—the supreme god of Memphis, translating the phrase, "Why has Apis, thy chosen one, fled?" But other towns besides Memphis are named, and Apis was worshipped in Memphis alone. He was indeed "The Mighty One" of that city; just as Jehovah was "The Mighty One of Israel." The plural of the adjective, it may be added, is used of strong oxen, but the singular never stands for an ox. On the whole, the singular seems likely to be correct, and may be

for Jehovah has cast him down. 16. He causes many to fall;[1] yea, one attacks the other; (the bands of the mercenary troops) say: 'Up! let us return to our own people, to the land of our birth, from the exterminating sword.' 17. They say, 'Pharaoh,[2] the king of Egypt, is a lost man; he has let his chance pass!' 18. As I live, says the King, whose name is Jehovah of Hosts: Verily, as a Tabor among the mountains and a Carmel on the sea, will the (invading destroyer) come.[3] 19. Make ready what thou needest on the way, in preparation for being carried off captive, thou native-born daughter[4] of Egypt; for Noph shall be waste and desolate, without an inhabitant.

"20. Egypt is like a wondrously fair heifer, but a deadly gadfly[5] comes out of the north (to destroy her)! 21. Her (foreign) hired troops also, in her midst, (men) like fatted bullocks, even *they* turn their backs and flee together, and will not face the foe; for the day of their destruction has come on them; the time of their punishment. 22. The voice of Egypt, (bowed and humbled to the dust,) is like the rustle of a serpent (gliding off in alarm through the fallen leaves of a wood); for her (enemies) march against her in strength, and come with axes against her, like men that hew down trees; 23. and they will hew down her forest,[6] saith Jehovah, for their number is countless; they are more than the locusts, they are innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt is put to shame, she is given into the hand of the people of the North. 25. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will visit Amon, the god of No—(that is, Thebes[7])—and Pharaoh, and Egypt; its gods and its kings; the Pharaoh and those who trust in him; 26. and I will give them into the hand of their deadly foe, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants. Yet, afterwards, it will flourish[8] as in the days of old, saith Jehovah.

"27. But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed,

applied either to the king of Egypt or to the god Apis, as is thought best by the reader. Ewald translates the passage "Thy Ox is carried off."

[1] **Jer. xlvi. 16-27.**

[2] The Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate, by the change of the vowel in the Hebrew, read "the name of" for "these."

[3] His awful might will rise high over that of all around him, as Tabor and Carmel above the landscape at their feet. Tabor is 1,805 feet above the sea level, 1,350 feet above the plain below. Carmel sinks into the Mediterranean in a steep cliff more than 500 feet in height. Robinson.

[4] Literally, "daughter."

[5] Mühlau und Volck. Gesenius, *Supp. to Thes.*, p. 111. Ewald translates it "a monster." Graf and others, as in the text.

[6] Jer. xxi. 14. Isa. x. 18, 33.

[7] See vol. ii. p. 16.

[8] Literally, "be inhabited."

O Israel! For, behold, I will deliver thee from the far-off land, and thy seed from the land of its captivity, and Jacob shall return, and be at rest and secure, no one disturbing him. 28. Fear not thou,[1] O Jacob, My servant, says Jehovah; for I am with thee; for I will make an utter end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make an utter end of thee, but only chasten thee according to right, and not leave thee unpunished."

Intercourse between Jerusalem and the exiles on the Chebar was still swift and constant in these years, and false hopes of the triumph of Egypt, cherished among them as much as in Palestine, needed no less to be discouraged. Hence, on the twelfth day of Tebet,[2] nearly our January, in the year 588, Ezekiel addressed his fellow-captives in words very similar to those of Jeremiah in the far-off capital.

"XXIX. 1. The word of Jehovah has come to me,[3] (cried he), saying: 2. Set thy face against Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt. 3. Speak, and say: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I come against thee, O Pharaoh, king of Egypt, thou great crocodile, lying in the midst of the canals (of the Nile), who hast said, 'My Nile stream is my own; I made it (what it is) for myself, (by canals, dams, sluices, and reservoirs).'[4] 4. But I will put a ring in thy jaws, and will make the fish of thy streams—(that is, the people of thy land)—cleave to thy scales, and I will drag thee up out of the midst of thy canals, and all the fish in them will stick to thy scales. 5. And I will throw thee out into the desert, thee and all the fish of thy canals; thou wilt fall on the open ground; thou shalt not be lifted up nor buried; for I give thee for meat to the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am Jehovah, because thou hast been a staff of (brittle) reed to the house of Israel. 7. When its

[1] **Jer. xlvi. 28.** [2] Literally, in the 10th moon; the 12th day of the moon.
[3] **Ezek. xxix. 1-7.**
[4] At one part on the Nile, I saw a great crowd digging out a broad canal *with their hands:* the sand, or Nile mud, being carried off on their heads, in small baskets. Nothing better can be supposed of the ancient system of making such "canals," etc. The huge Mahmoudieh canal was dug thus, in the days of Mehemet Ali. How many thousands have died during these strange engineering operations, first and last, who can tell?

sons took hold of thee with the hand thou didst snap across, and tear their whole shoulder; when they leaned on thee thou didst break, so that their whole body shook.

"8. Therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] Behold, I bring on thee, (O Egypt), the sword, and destroy from thee man and beast. 9. And the land of Egypt will be waste and desert, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

"Because Pharaoh has said, 'The Nile stream is mine, and I have made it,' 10. behold, for this, I am against thee, and against thy canals, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desert, from Migdol (on the farthest north-east), to Syene (on the farthest south), that is, to the borders of Ethiopia. 11. No foot of man or of cattle will pass through it, nor will it be inhabited for forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation above all desolate lands, and her towns will be a desolation above all desolate towns for forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the lands.

"13. Yet, thus says the Lord Jehovah: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples whither they were scattered. 14. And I will bring back the captives of Egypt, and will restore them to the land of Pathros,[2] the land of their birth, and there they shall be a weak kingdom. 15. It will be the weakest of kingdoms, nor will it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will make them weak, that they may no more rule over the nations. 16. And Egypt will no longer be the trust of the house of Israel, bringing their sin in remembrance (before God), by their thus turning (away from Him) to look to them. And they shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah."

Three months later,[3] when the siege of Jerusalem was near the end of its fifteenth month,[4] perhaps after the receipt, from Palestine, of news that Pharaoh's attempted relief had been defeated, Ezekiel once more addressed the exiles on the engrossing subject of the prospects of future help to Judah from the Nile. The word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him, saying:

[1] **Ezek. xxix. 8–16.**

[2] Egypt. Petores = South-country, Upper Egypt; the Thebais of the Greeks and Romans.

[3] Ezek. xxx. 20.

[4] See date in Ezek. xxiv. 1, 2; comp. with that in Ezek. xxx. 20.

"XXX. 21. Son of man! I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and, lo, it has not yet been set,[1] so that salves might be applied to it, or a bandage wrapped round it, to make it strong to hold the sword (again). 22. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will come to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and break (both) his arms—the strong one and that which has already been broken—and will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries.[2] 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put My sword into his hand, and will break the arms of Pharaoh, so that he shall groan before him like a deadly wounded man. 25. I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I give My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, that he may stretch it out against the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries; and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

The excitement in Babylonia as the siege of Jerusalem drew near its termination, must have been intense, and the increasing certainty that it would result in the utter destruction of the Jewish State, as the prophets had foretold, must have intensified the public feeling against Egypt, as the temptress that had led it to its ruin. It is not, therefore, matter of surprise that Ezekiel turned again to the subject,[3] in the very last days of the Holy City, and denounced the Pharaoh afresh. Most of this utterance, however, has already been given,[4] and need not be repeated. The glory of Assyria had been like that of the grandest cedar of Lebanon, exciting the envy of all the trees, even of Eden. Yet it had fallen. Egypt, therefore, which had no such lordliness of which to boast, could not hope to escape God's judgments. The Pharaoh also

[1] Literally, "bound." **Ezek. xxx. 21-26.**

[2] This was done to the vast crowds of prisoners taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

[3] Ezek. xxxi. 1-18.

[4] See vol. v. p. 294.

would be cast down beside the felled trees of Eden—the great ones of Assyria—in the Underworld; for Nineveh had been taken and destroyed, for now nearly twenty years; he would lie in the midst of the uncircumcised—that is, the godless heathen—who had been slain with the sword. This, adds Ezekiel, is the fate of Pharaoh and all his multitude: so says the Lord Jehovah.

The temporary raising of the siege had filled the citizens with hopes of ultimate deliverance, for men cling to their cherished dreams in the face of every improbability. The storm, it was fondly dreamed, had passed over, and the predictions of Jeremiah would remain unfulfilled. Even a dull and imperfect religious feeling revived. Jehovah, the national God, must be consulted. His prophet must be asked to intercede with Him for the city. He would perhaps hear so faithful a servant. Two dignitaries, therefore, Jehucal or Jucal,[1] apparently one of the "princes" of Judah, but a bitter enemy of Jeremiah, even to the length of wishing to kill him,[2] and Zephaniah, the Sagan, or second priest, who, as commandant of the temple, had been appealed to from Babylon to punish the prophet,[3] and had once before been sent to him by Zedekiah,[4] waited on the seer, as a new deputation from the palace, to ask him, in the name of the king, to pray for his fellow-citizens.

But, as might have been anticipated, the mission was a failure. Intercession with God was not to be bought either by threats or cajoling. Humble repentance, on the part of the king and his people, alone could secure it, and this was wanting. Incorruptible amidst a degenerate com-

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 1.
[2] Jer. xxxviii. 4.
[3] Jer. xxix. 25, 26.
[4] Jer. xxi. 1.

munity, the prophet answered the king's messengers as the spokesman of a higher than their master.

"XXXVII. 7. Thus saith Jehovah[1] the God of Israel (said he to them): Speak thus to the king of Judah, that sent you to inquire of Me. Behold, the army of Pharaoh, which has marched to relieve you, shall return to Egypt, their own land. 8. And the Chaldæans will come back, and fight against this city and take it, and burn it with fire.

"9. Thus saith Jehovah: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking that the Chaldæans are finally gone, for they will not go. 10. For if ye should smite the whole army of the Chaldæans which fights against you, and only some wounded men remained of them, even these would stand up, every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire."

With this dismal message, the courtiers were forced to be contented, but it roused to the uttermost their hostility to the prophet, and speedily led to active measures against him. Availing himself of the temporary withdrawal of the besieging army,[2] he had resolved to go out to his native village, Anathoth, about three miles north-east of Jerusalem,[3] apparently to secure his share of the tithes and produce of the Levitical glebe of the village, due to him as one of its priests; the distribution being made, it would seem, in public, at stated times.[4] Knowing that the Chaldæans would return, it was imperative that he should obtain the means of subsistence, to take back into the city, so soon to be beleaguered afresh.[5] A pretext for violence towards one so unpopular was eagerly wished, and this supplied it. No sooner, therefore, did he reach the gate

[1] **Jer. xxxvii. 7-10.**
[2] Jer. xxxvii. 11-15.
[3] *Dict. of the Bible.*
[4] "In the midst of the people," A.V.
[5] This is the best explanation of this verse (Jer. xxxvii. 12). Some think he went to claim a portion of land, but this seems a matter not likely to trouble him at such a time. The words translated "to separate himself," literally mean "to take his portion." Hitzig thinks it was a Sabbath year, during which nothing had been sown, and that Jeremiah went out to claim his strip of ground by seeing that the boundary stones were right, before the soil was broken up for a new crop.

on the north of the city, known as that of Benjamin or Ephraim,[1] from leading to the territory of these tribes, than the officer in charge of it arrested him, as intending to desert to the Chaldæans—though these were now away, on their march against Pharaoh Hophra. "It's a lie," retorted Jeremiah, with Oriental bluntness, when seized; "I'm not deserting." But his indignant protest was not heeded, and he was led off, at once, as a prisoner, to the princes, or privy council. These, unfortunately, were no longer the same as had befriended him so warmly under Jehoiakim.[2] *They* had probably been carried off to Babylon with Jeconiah.[3] From the present officials, whom he had compared to rotten figs,[4] he could expect no favour. Glad to see their enemy caught at last, they broke into a storm of rage when he appeared, and summarily ordered him to receive forty strokes save one, of the stick,[5] a terrible punishment, inflicted on the naked body, as he lay on the ground, on his face, men holding him down by the legs and arms, during the bastinado. After this he was to be thrust into an underground dungeon, most probably a large bottle-shaped cistern, such as are still below many of the houses in Jerusalem, or in their "yards." In this case, the dungeon was a disused cistern below the house of one of their number, Jonathan the scribe, perhaps their secretary.

How long the prophet lay in this "house of the pit,"[6] is not known. It is possible that the house with which it was connected stood in the temple precincts, or near the palace,

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 7. Zech. xiv. 10. 2 Kings xiv. 13. Neh. viii. 16.
[2] Jer. xxvi. 16; xxxvi. 19. [3] Jer. xxiv. 1; xxix. 2. [4] Jer. xxiv.
[5] The text says "smote him." Forty stripes were the legal maximum of a public scourging (Deut. xxv. 3). But only thirty-nine were given, for fear of exceeding the lawful number. For the mode of infliction see Lev. xix. 20. Deut. xxii. 18; xxv. 2, 3. [6] Jer. xxxvii. 16-21.

on the south side of the sacred buildings. If so, one of the countless hidden arches, by which the surface was raised to a level along the rough sides of Mount Moriah, may have been his prison; for the whole of the plateau of both temple and palace is honeycombed with a series of vaults and cisterns, one of the former extending 150 feet from north to south.[1] But wherever the dungeon was, the sufferings of the prophet were intense from cold or neglect, or both; so intense, indeed, that he felt himself sinking under them.[2] It must have been with no common delight therefore that, at last, he received an order brought to him from the king, to come secretly to the palace, and cheer the monarch's despair, if he possibly could, by some words of comfort from Jehovah. Virtually powerless in the hands of his court, the phantom ruler dared not consult him openly. Weak and irresolute, he could not venture to brave its anger by acting, even in so small a matter, as became his office. Most men, after such an imprisonment, would have been glad to give as favourable an answer as they could. But no personal consideration weighed with the prophet. Brought face to face, in some private chamber, with the man who held his life or death in his hands, he calmly told him: "There *is* a word from Jehovah, for He has said, Thou, Zedekiah, shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." Then, seizing the opportunity of being in the presence, he went on: "In what have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that thou shouldst throw me into such a dungeon? Where now are thy prophets who told thee that the king of Babylon would not come against thee, or against this land? Therefore, hear me, my lord king, and

[1] Captain Warren. *Recovery of Jerusalem*, p. 17. [2] Jer. xxxvii. 20.

let my entreaty before thee, I pray thee, be granted; and do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there." Coming at such a time, when the awful dignity of his office surrounded the petitioner, this request could not be refused. Orders were, therefore, issued to transfer him from the "house of the pit" he so much feared, to the "court of the watch," and to give him a piece of bread each day, from the Bakers' Street,[1] as long as any was left in the city. Fear of the nobles, and perhaps of the people, might prevent his being set free, but his detention should henceforth be at least less painful than hitherto.

The comparative liberty of the prophet brought him, however, into fresh danger.[2] Chained, it may be, to the wall of the court, he had free intercourse with the soldiers and people,[3] and since nothing would induce him to keep silent as to the issue of the siege, his words spread far and near. That their enemy should thus be more influential than ever, infuriated the nobles of the council.[4] It was reported to some of them, among others to Jucal, who had recently visited him from the king, and Pashur,[5] the son of Malchiah, who had been one of the first deputation to him from Zedekiah,[6] that he had said, "Thus saith Jehovah, He who remains in this town will die by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; but he that goes out to the

[1] The bread was made then, as now, in round pieces, about eight inches across, and an inch thick, and three of these were required for a meal (Luke xi. 5). One was, therefore, barely enough to support life (1 Sam. ii. 36). Public bakers are mentioned in Hos. vii. 4, 6. As with other trades in the East at the present time, bakers lived in one street in Jerusalem. We read of the "Tower of the Ovens," Neh. iii. 11; xii. 38 (furnaces A. V.).

[2] Jer. xxxviii. 1–3.

[3] Jer. xxxviii. 1; xxxii. 8, 12.

[4] Jer. xxxviii. 1.

[5] Jucal and Pashur were confidential officers of the king. Jer. xxi. 1; xxxvii. 3. Of Shephatiah we know nothing. Gedaliah was perhaps a son of that Pashur who put Jeremiah in the stocks. Jer. xx. 1, 2.

[6] Jer. xxi. 1.

Chaldæans shall live ; he will have his life for his share of the spoil, and shall not die. Thus saith Jehovah, This town shall, assuredly, be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and will be taken by them."

The resolution of the council was speedily formed.[1] Going to the king, they demanded that the prophet should be put to death, since his words were dispiriting the fighting men left in the town, and the people at large. He was a traitor, they maintained, seeking the hurt of the city. Zedekiah might have reminded them that no blame could attach to the prophet, since he only repeated words put in his mouth by God Himself ; words which he was bound to deliver. But to play the man was beyond him. Cowed by their bearing, he at once gave way, telling them that Jeremiah was in their hands, since they ruled, not he. Thus authorized, they ordered their victim to be seized forthwith and put into the underground rain-cistern of Malchiah, a member of the royal family, in the court of the guard, where he then was. Tying cords round him, therefore, he was let down, through the funnel-shaped mouth,[2] into this hideous dungeon. Fortunately, there was no water in it ; but the bottom was covered with deep mud, into which the prophet sank. It was clear that his life was to be taken, with every aggravation of previous misery ; for the cold and wet must soon have killed him, had not help been at hand.

Among the officials[3] of the palace was a black eunuch from Africa, such as we see daily in Constantinople and Egypt, apparently the keeper of the royal harem, whose title only—Ebed Melech, "the king's slave"—has been

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 5, 6.
[2] See vol. i. p. 422 vol. iii. p. 333.
[3] Jer. xxxviii. 7–13.

preserved. News of the prophet's treatment having reached him, he hurried to Zedekiah, who, at the moment, was engaged on some public duty in the vacant space inside the North or Benjamin Gate, and told him what had happened, boldly denouncing it, and adding that the sufferer would die of hunger in the cistern, since there was now no more bread in the town. "Take thirty men with you" (or, according to a more probable reading, "take three"), replied the king, with unwonted decision, "and get him out of the cistern before he die." As quickly as possible the eunuch was at the mouth of the cistern, to cheer the prophet by announcing his deliverance. Ropes passed down, with rags to put under the armpits, to prevent the strain from chafing them, soon did the rest, and Jeremiah once more saw the light and took his old place in the court of the guard. The spasmodic vigour of Zedekiah in this incident was touching. The want of moral courage alone, had, apparently, brought him into all his trouble. Balked and overridden by the Egyptian party, he had wanted strength of mind to turn against them and free himself. He had submitted to break his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, and make an alliance with Egypt, against his own convictions, and he could not act decisively even now, though his life was in the balance. Jeremiah saw his position exactly. A mere puppet in the hands of his council, he had only to flee to the Chaldæan camp, and tell the truth, and it would be recognized, to his personal acquittal. The guilt of the revolt would at once be shifted to the right shoulders, those of the imperious Egyptian faction, who now in effect reigned. Zedekiah, unlike them, respected Jeremiah as a true prophet, and was not without reverence towards Jehovah. But he had no force

of character. Eager to consult the prophet, he had not courage to act on his advice when given. A proof of this was soon shewn.[1]

With a town now reduced to famine and even cannibalism,[2] and decimated by the plague; the houses full of the sick and wounded; bloody fights between contending parties, as to surrendering or holding out, crowding the streets with fresh horrors; the roar of the siege night and day filling the air; Zedekiah was fain once more to seek counsel from the prophet. But he could only venture to see him privately.[3] A covered passage leading from the palace to the temple[4] afforded the opportunity, and thither, where no one could witness the interview, Jeremiah was brought. Stout-hearted in words, Zedekiah now, while no one saw or heard, would have nothing hidden from him. The prophet might speak out fearlessly. But the terrors of the recent past, and his knowledge of the king's fickleness and effeminacy, had made him, also, cautious. "If I tell you all that God has said, will you not kill me?" replied he. "And is it not the case, that even if I do counsel you, you will not hear me?" But Zedekiah, in mortal anxiety, was ready to give any assurances. He swore, "by the life of Jehovah, who created our life in us," that he would neither himself kill him, nor deliver him up to the men who sought his life. Thus assured, Jeremiah repeated what he had so often said, that if Zedekiah gave himself up to the Chaldæans, he would save his life, and that of his house, and Jerusalem would not be burned; while, if he did not, the city would be destroyed, and he himself would fall into the hands of the enemy. He took care, however, to say noth-

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 14–19. [2] Lam. iv. 10. [3] Jer. xxxvii. 17.
[4] The "third entry" (Jer. xxxviii. 14) seems to have been such a passage.

ing about the "princes" who had stirred up the revolt, knowing that their doom was fixed, in any case.

But the "I will and I will not" of moral weakness held the poor man like a spell.[1] He was afraid, he said, that the Chaldæans would hand him over to the Jewish deserters in their camp, and that these would mock him. "They will not deliver you up to them," replied Jeremiah. "Obey, I beseech you, the voice of Jehovah, which I speak to you, and it will be well with you, and your soul will live. But if you refuse to go out of Jerusalem and give yourself up to the Chaldæans—this is the word that Jehovah has revealed to me: Behold, all the women of the harem, that are left in your palace—wives, concubines, and attendants—shall be brought out as prisoners, to the generals[2] of the king of Babylon, and even these women will mock your weakness, singing:

"'Your friends (O King Zedekiah,—the court party—) have led you astray
And have made a puppet of you:[3]

"'Your feet sank in the slough into which they led you,
And now (instead of helping you) they draw back,
(And leave you to get out as you best can).'

"Thus[4] they will bring out all your wives and your children, to the Chaldæans, and you, yourself, will not escape out of their hands; you will be captured by the king of Babylon, and your refusal to obey God's voice will cause this city to be burned with fire."

The fate of the weakling hung in the balance,[5] but his irresolution and cowardice weighed down the scale against him. Fear of the tyrannical oligarchy unmanned him.

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 19–22.
[2] Princes.
[3] Overpowered you.
[4] Jer. xxxviii. 23.
[5] Jer. xxxviii. 24–28.

They must on no account know that he had spoken to the prophet; nothing that had been said between the two must be repeated. He had, moreover, the meanness to draw back from his oath, so far as to say that it would be kept only if perfect secrecy were maintained, and he even stooped to ask Jeremiah to equivocate. Should the princes, hearing of the interview, threaten him with death if he did not tell what had passed at it, he was to answer, that he had asked not to be be sent back to the prison in Jonathan's house. No doubt this favour had been requested, else Jeremiah would not have said so, yet it was by no means the whole truth. But Jeremiah felt himself free to act on the king's recommendation. He was not bound to tell his mortal enemies everything, and he did not do so. When, therefore, they came, he had the adroitness to put them off with this answer, and was left without further annoyance, a prisoner in the court of the guard, till the city was taken.

While these events were passing, the Chaldæan army had returned and recommenced the siege; Pharaoh Hophra having been driven back.[1] But though the prophet knew that the city must fall, he abated nothing of his calm assurance that it would hereafter rise from its ashes, and that Judah would once more flourish. He felt that his race was the chosen people of God, and that the promises to it implied such a restoration.

An opportunity for shewing this confidence, so well-fitted to cheer true followers of the ancient religion, strangely offered itself while the immediate prospects of the State were sinking to the lowest.

A cousin of Jeremiah, Hanameel,[2] son of Shallum, the

[1] Jer. xxxii. 1-5. [2] Jer. xxxii. 6-15.

prophet's uncle, a priest like himself, had a plot of ground in the neighbourhood of Anathoth,[1] which he wished to sell. Jewish law, however, prohibited free sale, and required that ground in the market should be offered to the next of kin, that it might still remain in the family.[2] The lands strictly belonging to the tribe of Levi could not be sold, as they were held in common,[3] but Hanameel may have inherited this piece through his mother,[4] and having no children,[5] may thus have been free to dispose of it, like Barnabas the Levite, in later times.[6]

Jeremiah being the next heir, and, as such, holding also the right of redemption in the Jubilee year,[7] had the ground from any cause been sold to a third party, Hanameel naturally came to him, to offer him the option of purchase. We do not know why he wished to sell, but the darkness of the times was reason enough. His proposal was at once recognized by the prophet, as in accordance with a Divine pre-intimation received beforehand, and a bargain was forthwith struck. The price was small according to our notions —only seventeen shekels[8]—about two guineas—but the peculiarities of the Jewish land laws, and possibly the pressure of the times, may have affected its value. Two copies of a deed were duly written, or, more probably, stamped, in Babylonian fashion, on clay tablets or cylinders, and wit-

[1] It must have been within 2,000 cubits of the village. Num. xxxv. 5.
[2] Lev. xxv. 24, 25; Ruth iv. 6. Keil, *Bib. Archæol.* p. 208.
[3] Lev. xxv. 34. See Grotii, *Annot. on Jos.*, 24, 33.
[4] Num. xxvi. 8.
[5] This is implied.
[6] Acts iv. 37.
[7] Lev. xxv. 23-28.
[8] In the margin the Hebrew is correctly translated "seven shekels and ten pieces of silver," a form of expression which has led to the idea that the seven shekels were *golden*. This, however, is a mere conjecture. We do not know the size of the piece of ground, which may have been very small, and it is to be remembered that the purchase was, in reality, only that of its crops, till the next year of Jubilee, which may have been not far off. Besides, silver was very much more valuable then than now. Araunah's floor was bought for 50 shekels. 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

nesses having been called, the money was weighed out in the scales, as is still the custom in the East. One deed having been left open for reference, and the other carefully sealed up, both were handed to Baruch, the constant friend of the prophet, before Hanameel and the witnesses who had signed the documents, and all the Jews who sat as prisoners in the court of the guard, with the request that they should be put into an earthen vessel for preservation, for "houses and lands and vineyards shall one day be again bought in the land." Jehovah had said it. The whole transaction was striking, at such a time. We extol the patriotism of the Roman, who bought, at its full price, the land on which Hannibal's camp was pitched, outside the gates of Rome,[1] but it was even nobler, in the son of a feeble race like the Jews, to buy a field, at the moment in the hands of a mighty power like Babylon, knowing, as he did, that before the purchase could be of value, his people must expiate their sins by captivity for two generations in a far-distant land. The cylinders or tablets having been duly baked, and thus hardened for preservation, each of them bearing a copy of the full record, would be enclosed in an outer clay covering, on which was stamped an abstract of the deed within, and giving the names of the witnesses, and this would, finally, be put into a clay jar to protect it, and laid away safely, like the many clay deeds of the Egibi Bank at Babylon—the great banking establishment of Babylonia from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to that of Xerxes—the clay records of which now enrich the British Museum.

That he should have acted thus derives an additional moral grandeur, as an act of passive obedience to Divine

[1] Liv., xxvi. 11. Florus, ii. 6.

command, in the face of overwhelming perplexity as to the possible realization of the hopes it implied. Jeremiah knew that Jerusalem would hereafter rise from its ashes, and Judah again be peopled, because God had said it; but to reconcile this with the further knowledge that the city, and even the temple, would, within a short time, be burned to the ground, and the population of the whole land be carried off to Babylon, was beyond his powers. Under such circumstances he betook himself, as godly men have done in all ages, to Him who alone could make darkness light. Prayer, to him, as to us, was the natural language of the earthly child to his Heavenly Father.

When, therefore, he had delivered to Baruch the two title-deeds, he sought relief to his soul in its difficulties, by asking light from God.[1] Bowing low, it may be before all, in the court of the guard, fettered as he was, he breathed out to Jehovah the deep cry of his heart; speaking, we may fancy, like Hannah, in his soul only; the lips moving, but no audible words escaping them.

"XXXII. 17. O Thou, Lord Jehovah![2] Behold, Thou hast made heaven and earth by Thy great power and Thine outstretched arm; nothing is too hard for Thee! 18. Thou shewest lovingkindness to thousands, and payest back the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them:[3] Thou great and mighty God, Jehovah of Hosts is Thy name. 19. Great in counsel, and mighty in deeds; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings! 20. Thou didst signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and doest them even to this day, both in Israel and to men at large, and hast made Thyself, even now, a name! 21. And thou leddest forth Thy people

[1] Jer. xxxii. 7-16. [2] Jer. xxxii. 17-21.

[3] The language is borrowed from the custom of pouring grain or the like into the lifted-up fold of the outer garment, which is made, as it were, into a bag for the time. Ruth iii. 15. Prov. xvii. 23. Num. xi. 12. Isa. xl. 11; lxv. 6, 7. Luke vi. 38.

Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, and a strong hand, and a stretched-out arm, and with great terror (to their enemies); 22. and gavest them this land,[1] which Thou hadst sworn to their fathers to give them—a land flowing with milk and honey. 23. And they came in, and took possession of it; but they obeyed not Thy voice, neither walked in Thy law:[2] they have done nothing of all that Thou commandedst them to do—therefore Thou hast let all this evil come upon them.

"24. Behold! the mounds[3] of the enemy reach to the town, to take it; the city is given, by sword, famine, and pestilence, into the hands of the Chaldæans who besiege it, and what Thou hast said is come to pass: Thou, Thyself, seest it! 25. Yet Thou hast said to me, O Lord Jehovah, Buy the field for money, and take witnesses (to the purchase) —though the city is (already, as it were,) given into the hands of the Chaldæans."

A prayer so lowly and fervent had favour with God. The still small voice of the Almighty presently answered it in the soul of the prophet.

"27. Behold, I am Jehovah, the God of all flesh: is there anything impossible to Me? 28. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldæans, and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29. The Chaldæans who fight against it shall come in, and set fire to it, and burn it, and, with it, the houses on whose roofs they burned incense to Baal, and poured out drink offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger. 30. For the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have done only evil before Me from their youth (as a people). For the sons of Israel (as a whole) have done nothing but provoke Me with the work of their hands,[4] saith Jehovah. 31. This city (Jerusalem) has been to Me a provocation[5] of

[1] **Jer. xxxii. 22-31.** [2] Torah.

[3] The first step in a siege was probably to advance the battering ram. If the castle was built, as in the plains of Assyria and Babylonia, on an artificial eminence, an inclined plane reaching to the top of the height was formed of earth, stones, or trees, and the besiegers were thus able to bring their engines to the foot of the walls, and also to escalade the walls, the top of which might otherwise have been beyond the reach of their ladders. Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. pp. 36-7. See Isa. xxxvii. 33; 2 Kings xix. 32. The Egyptians followed the same plan. Ezek. xvii. 17.

[4] Their idols. Chap. x. 3-9. Deut. iv. 28. 2 Kings xix. 18.

[5] A burden on My anger, demanding indignation being shewn.

My anger and of My fury, from the day that they built it [1] to this day—(demanding) that I should put it away from before My face 32. on account of all the evil of the sons of Israel,[2] and of the sons of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger: they, their kings, their princes,[3] their priests, and their prophets; the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33. They turned their back to Me and not their face, and though I earnestly and unweariedly taught them (through My prophets), they would not listen, to receive instruction. 34. Instead of that, they set up their abominable idols in the House which is called by My name, to defile it, 35. and built high places to Baal, in the Valley of Benhinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Moloch—which I neither commanded them to do, nor ever had it in My mind (to permit their doing); causing Judah (as it did) to sin.

"36. Now, therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning this city, of which you (rightly) say that 'it will be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, by sword, famine, and pestilence.' 37. Behold! I will (hereafter) gather them from all lands whither I have driven them, in My anger and in My fury and in My fierce wrath. And I will bring them back to this place, and cause them to dwell securely in it, 38. and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 39. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me for ever,[4] for their own good and that of their children after them. 40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not draw back from them, or from doing them good; and I will put My fear in their hearts, so that they may not (again) turn away from Me (as in the past). 41. And I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly [5] plant them in this land, with My whole heart, and with My whole soul.

"42. For thus saith Jehovah: As I have brought all this great evil on this people, so I will bring to them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And plough-land and pasture shall be bought in this country, respecting which ye say, 'It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hands of the Chaldæans.' 44. Men will (once more) buy fields [6] for money, and sign deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses (to the purchase—here), in the land of Benjamin, and round about Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, and in the towns in the hills, and in those of the Shephelah, and in the towns of the Negeb.

[1] 2 Sam. v. 6, 7. [2] **Jer. xxxii. 32–44.** [3] **Leading men.**
[4] **Deut. iv. 10; vi. 24.** [5] **Hebrew, in truth.**
[6] **Literally, "the field," *i.e.*, land over the country.**

For I will put an end to their captivity, and restore them to their own country, saith Jehovah."

But the "Hearer of Prayer" was not content even with this full answer to His servant's petition. Not long afterwards, amidst the terrible progress of the siege, when many houses near the walls had been pulled down for materials of defence, and the prophet was still a prisoner in the court of the guard, "the Word" came to him a second time.

"XXXIII. 2. Thus saith Jehovah,[1] who does what He hath purposed; Jehovah who determines what He wills, and carries it out; Jehovah is His name! 3. Call upon Me and I will answer thee, and make known to thee great and secret things[2] which thou dost not know! 4. For thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, Jerusalem, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which have been pulled down for (material with which to strengthen the town wall against) the battering-rams,[3] and (to build up new defences against) the swords (of the storming columns): 5. The citizens will advance to fight with the Chaldæans; but they will only fill the houses with the bodies of men, whom I have slain in My anger and in My fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid My face from this city."

But still God has not finally cast off His people.

"6. Behold, I will lay on the wounds of the people a bandage and healing salve, and will cure them, and I will pour down[4] on them a fulness of peace and truth. 7. And I will bring back the captives of Judah and Israel, and will build up the state, as of old. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity that they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their sins that they have committed, and in which they have fallen away from Me. 9. And Jerusalem shall, again, be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do to it; and they shall fear and tremble[5] (with awe), at all the goodness and all the prosperity that I prepare for it.

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 1-9.
[2] Literally, "unapproachable."
[3] Literally, "mounts."
[4] "Roll down."
[5] "A fearful joy."

"10. Thus saith Jehovah,[1] There shall again be heard in this place, of which you say, 'It is desolate, without man and without beast'—in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are (about to be left) desolate, without men and without inhabitants, and without beast, 11. the sounds of joy and gladness; the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride,[2] and the words of singing—

" 'Give thanks unto Jehovah of Hosts; for Jehovah is good,
For His mercy endureth for ever!'

the chant of them that bring the thankoffering into the House of Jehovah! For I will bring back the captives, and restore things as in your happiest times, saith Jehovah.

"12. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Again, in this place which is (about to be) desolate, without man and without beast, and in all the towns of Judah, shall be a gathering place of shepherds, leading their sheep to rest. 13. In the hill towns, in the towns of the Shephelah, and in those of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin and in the parts round Jerusalem, and in the town of Judah, the sheep will again pass under the rod[3] of him that counts them, saith Jehovah. 14. Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, when I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah."

In those days the kingly and priestly offices will be restored.

"15. In those days and at that time, saith Jehovah, I will cause a Stem of Righteousness to grow up from David,[4] and He will execute justice and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely; and for this men will call Him, Jehovah is our Righteousness.

"17. For thus saith Jehovah: David shall never want a man to sit

[1] **Jer. xxxiii. 10-17.**

[2] A sound of music, shrill and sharp, announces the approach of a nuptial procession. In front, march the players on fifes and tambourines, and next two lines of women and girls, in the middle of whom is the bride, walking between two elder women. Four men hold over her head a dais of pink gauze, and a woman waves before her a large feather fan. She is entirely covered with a veil, and has on her head a red cloth, surmounted with a coronet of gold. The whole party utter cries of joy. Bovet's *Egypt, etc.*, p. 43.

[3] Literally, "hands."

[4] Of David's race, from his root or stock. Verses 15 and 16 are the same as Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

upon the throne of the house of Israel. 18. Nor shall the priests,[1] the Levites, ever want a man before Me, to offer burnt offerings, to kindle (the fire on the altar for) flour offerings, and to burn sacrifices to Me, for ever."

This covenant with David, and with the priests, would be as sure as the order of nature.

"20. Thus saith Jehovah: If ye can break My covenant with the day and with the night, so that there shall be no longer day or night in its season, 21. then may, also, My covenant with David My servant be broken, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and My covenant with the Levites, the priests, My ministers! 22. As the hosts of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the seed of David My servant, and of the Levites, who minister to Me."

The glorious assurance thus given respecting the throne and the altar, is next extended to the people as a whole.

"24. Have you not thought of what the people say—'The two families (Judah and Israel), whom Jehovah chose, He has cast off'? With such words they dishonour My people, declaring that it is no longer a nation in their eyes. 25. Thus saith Jehovah, If I have not established My covenant with day and night, or ordained the ordinances of heaven and earth, 26. then will I also cast off the seed of Jacob, and of David My servant, and take no more rulers from his seed, to be over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! But I will cause the captives to return and will have mercy upon them!"

[1] **Jer. xxxiii. 18-26.**

CHAPTER VI.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

THE siege of Jerusalem had begun on the 10th of the month Kislew, nearly our December, in the year B.C. 591, but had been interrupted for two or three months by the departure of the Chaldæans, to repel the advance of Pharaoh Hophra. This effected, the struggle had recommenced with more fury than ever. But the Jews, like all Orientals, were stubborn in their resistance behind the walls of a fortress, and held out bravely, against the tremendous superiority of their assailants. Nothing could subdue their courage. They had trusted in Hophra relieving them, but fought none the less manfully when they found their expectations deceived. Jeremiah, a prisoner in the court of the watch, in vain counselled surrender, as the only means of preserving the city, or the lives and liberties of its citizens. He was assailed by charges of treachery, and by threats, for damping the spirits of the population. That a place, in all probability, of not more than 20,000[1] inhabitants should have kept at bay the whole strength of Nebuchadnezzar for nearly eighteen months, shews a noble defence, even admitting the natural strength of the position. Two thousand citizens of the best families, it is to be remembered, and a thousand skilled mechanics, with seven thousand of the

[1] This is the estimate of Thenius, *B. d. Könige*, p. 466.

bravest fighting men, had been carried off to Babylon ten years before.[1] But the fall of the city was only a question of time. The besiegers had invested it on every side, so that no provisions could enter, and they had possession of the whole country, far and near. Lachish and Azekah, in the Maritime Plain, had succumbed, and 3,023 persons of both sexes had been seized and led off to Babylon.[2] The



SIEGE OF A CITY BY THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

On the left, soldiers in mail are throwing down the wall with crowbars. On an upper tower are women; one apparently wailing, the other encouraging the defenders. On the right is a battering ram with a tower over it, from which the Assyrians in armour shoot from the level of the top of the wall. The garrison are throwing over stones, etc., on soldiers who are guiding the ram. Archers kneel on the ground at the side of the battering ram. The general and his attendant, drawn in large size, are on the right; the attendant holding a shield before his master.

thud of the battering rams shook the walls day and night; archers made the defence increasingly hard, by constant showers of arrows from high wooden forts; catapults of all sizes hurled stones into the town with a force as deadly as that of modern bullets, and darts tipped with fire kindled the roofs of houses; mines were dug under the walls, and attempts at escalade by ladders were renewed at every favourable opportunity.

[1] 2 Kings xxiv. 14-16. [2] Jer. lii. 28, for seventh year read seventeenth.

But the besieged were not behind in their resources of defence. Houses were demolished, that new walls might be built of their materials, inside each spot weakened by the battering rams.[1] The ramparts were vigorously defended by archers and slingers, equal in bravery to those of the Chaldæans. The rams were caught, when possible, by doubled chains or ropes, to weaken their blows, or, if it might be, to capsize them. Lighted torches and firebrands were thrown on their roofs, and on those of the catapults, to set them on fire. The gates of the town were zealously defended against the efforts of the enemy to burst them open, or to burn them.[2] Nothing, however, could prevent the final catastrophe. Famine within the walls aided the besiegers without, and it was speedily followed, as is always the case, with an outbreak of pestilence. Food was well-nigh gone. There had long been no bread.[3] Mothers were, at last, driven to murder and eat their children.[4] The richest citizens wandered about searching for scraps in the dunghills. Effeminate nobles, whose fairness and personal beauty had been their pride, were reduced to black-faced ghosts by hunger. To make matters worse, feuds broke out in the city. Some were for surrender, others for holding out to the last, and every street became a battle-field.[5]

Yet, amidst the roar of war, the wail of mourners, the shrieks of the wounded and the despairing, and the tumult of intestine strife, Jeremiah never lost his self-possession, though forced to sit helpless in the midst of so much danger and privation. His deliverance from the cistern prison,

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 4.
[2] For this description of a Chaldæan siege, see Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. ii. pp. 367, ff.
[3] Jer. xxxvii. 21; xxxviii. 9; lii. 6. Ezek. v. 10.
[4] Baruch ii. 3. Lam. iv. 10. [5] Lam. iv. 12–15.

in which, according to Josephus, the mire had reached up to his neck,[1] had put him under lasting obligation to the black eunuch who had rescued him. He was now, moreover, free to move about in the court of the watch, to which Ebed-melech frequently came, in passing out of the palace, and he repaid his kindness by cheering words, telling him that God would preserve him amidst all the dangers around, as a return for the favour shewn to His servant.

"XXXIX. 16. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel (said he), Behold I will bring My words upon this city for evil and not for good, and they shall be accomplished in that day, before thee. 17. But I will save thee, in that day, saith Jehovah; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men whom thou fearest. 18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for booty to thee, because thou hast trusted in Me, saith Jehovah."[2]

At last came the end. The siege had lasted within a day or two of eighteen months,[3] but a practicable breach now invited the stormers. Waiting for the cover of darkness, the Chaldæan force detached for this service moved out of their camp towards midnight, on the ninth of the month Tammuz, nearly our July, and, after a fierce struggle, Jerusalem was in their hands. Marching in by the Middle Gate of the inner wall, dividing Mount Zion from the Lower City, their generals took up their quarters near it,[4] as a point from which both the Upper and Lower City could be most easily controlled. The names and titles of some of them still survive; the latter, by their high rank, implying a large force to have been engaged, and thus shewing the desperateness of the defence. Fore-

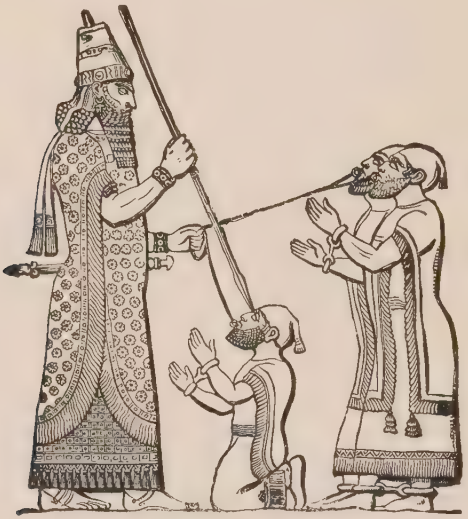
[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vii. 4.
[2] Jer. xxxix. 16-18
[3] Jer. lii. 4. Comp. with Jer. xxxix. 1; lii. 6.
[4] Jer. xxxix. 3.

most, amidst a brilliant cavalcade, rode Nergal Sharezer —"Nergal, protect the king!" the name of a former monarch of Babylon; Samgar-Nebo—"May Nebo be propitious;" Sarsechim, one of the two chief eunuchs;[1] a second Nergal Sharezer, the chief of the royal magi, or "deeply learned;" Nebuzaradan—"Nebo, grant me children"—the commander of the body-guard[2] of Nebuchadnezzar; and Nebushartan—"Nebo, deliver me!"—the second chief of the eunuchs.[3]

The shout of the conquerors was the signal to Zedekiah that all was lost. Only flight could save him. The breach had been made in the north wall, where alone close access to the fortifications was possible, and the Hill of Zion, on which the palace stood, was not yet in the hands of the Chaldæans. The south gate, close to the royal gardens, was still available. It lay at the south-east corner of the city, between the inner wall and that which ran across from the Tyropœon valley to Ophel, joining that spot to Mount Zion, and was known as the Horse Gate.[4] If Zedekiah, and the fugitives who might escape with him—many of them deeply compromised in the revolt—could reach Gilead, they might be safe. They therefore made for the Arabah,[5] south of the Dead Sea, striking across the wild stretches of the wilderness of Judah, to the south-east. But flight in that direction proving impossible in the darkness, they turned towards the plain of the Jordan, north of their intended route. Meanwhile, the alarm was given, that the king and a strong band of men had broken through the Chaldæan

[1] Rabsaris means this also.
[2] The guard that stood before Nebuchadnezzar. Jer. lii. 12.
[3] For the meaning of the names, see Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, pp. 273-276.
[4] Keil. Neh. iii. 28. Jer. lii. 7. [5] Jer. lii. 7. Deut. i. 1.

outposts, on the south-east of Jerusalem, and instant pursuit was ordered. The steep pass of the Kidron forthwith swarmed with troops pushing down towards Jericho, with only too fatal haste. Before the panic-stricken fugi-



THE ASSYRIAN KING BLINDING A MANACLED AND FETTERED PRISONER, WHO WITH THE TWO OTHERS IS FURTHER SECURED BY A METAL RING THROUGH THE LIP.

tives could cross the Jordan, they were overtaken, and the mere approach of the enemy was enough. Zedekiah was instantly deserted, and, with a number of his chief men, fell into the hands of the pursuers.[1] His daughters, who may not have been with him, were, however, fortunate enough to escape, but only to fall into the hands of one Ishmael, a member of the royal family, soon to prove an arch traitor.

[1] Jer. xxxix. 5; lii. 8.

Thrown into chains at once, the captive king was led back to Jerusalem, and sent on, thence, to Riblah, ten days' journey to the north—for it stood about thirty-five miles north of Baalbek. There, Nebuchadnezzar awaited him. Brought before the Great King, with the other captives, he was met with a storm of only too well-deserved reproach, for his broken oath, and soon found that he could expect no mercy. All the princes taken with him were at once ordered to be slain. Then, with a refinement of cruelty, his own sons were put to death before him—the last sight he was ever to behold; for a spear, thrust into his eyes, most probably by Nebuchadnezzar himself, presently blinded him for ever. Arminius Vambery describes a scene, at Khiva, which must have been the counterpart to that at Riblah. "I found about a hundred horsemen," says he, in "the public square, who had just arrived from the camp, covered with dust, each of them leading a couple of prisoners, amongst whom were women and children, all, alike, tied either to the horses' tails or to the saddle bows; each horseman bringing with him, also, a sack, which was thrown across the saddle. As soon as they arrived, each of them handed over the prisoners he had brought with him, as a present to the Khan, or some other grandee of the land. Then they removed the sacks from the saddles, and taking hold of the two sides of the one end, spilled their contents on the ground, as one does with potatoes. But these were human heads, the heads of slaughtered enemies, which were rolling at the feet of the official who wrote down their number. He first carefully counted the heads brought by each horseman, and then gave a receipt for them; the servant, meanwhile, kicking them into a heap. The horsemen galloped away with

their receipts, which were drafts on the treasurer for their respective rewards, in the shape of robes of honour, for four, twenty, or forty heads.

"There were three hundred prisoners of war in the third courtyard—all covered with rags, and looking, from their fear of death, and the starving they had undergone, for days past, like dead men risen from their graves. They were already divided into two groups, those under forty years of age, who were fit to be sold as slaves, or to be passed into slavery as presents to great men; and those who, from their position or age, were regarded as chieftains or leaders. Those of the first class were led away by their escorts, in bands of fifteen, tied to each other by iron collars. Part of the second group were sent to the block, or to the gallows, but eight of them, of an advanced age, lay down on their backs, at a hint from the executioner. In this situation their hands and feet were tied, and he, kneeling on their chests, and stabbing the eyes of each of them with a sharp knife, deprived them, in turn, of their eyesight. After he had accomplished his cruel task, he wiped his bloody knife on the gray beard of one of his victims. It was a dreadful sight to see these miserable people, after the fetters had been removed from their hands and feet, in their groping attempts to rise from the ground. Some knocked their heads against each other, others sank to the ground from sheer exhaustion, moaning, and beating the ground with their feet in their agony. I shall think with horror of this scene, as long as I live."[1]

In the unchanging East, the circumstances which must have accompanied the vengeance taken on Zedekiah and

[1] Vambery's *Life*, 207-8. The "heaps of heads" remind us of those of the heads of Ahab's sons, thrown down before Jehu.

his fellow-prisoners, could not be more vividly painted. But this was only the beginning of his humiliation. Chained hand and foot, with a ring through his lips as if he were a wild beast, he was put into a cage, and carried off to Babylon, to lie in a dungeon till death put an end to his sufferings.[1] How long he survived is unknown, but he was apparently dead when Jehoiachin, his predecessor, was freed by Evil Merodach, the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, twenty-six years from this time.[2] Three kings of Judah were now captives in the hands of their enemies—Jehoahaz in Egypt, and two others in Babylon. The sins of the nation had been heavily punished; but it was to be purified by these trials, and fitted for the great work still before it, in preparing the way for Christianity. Such multiplied calamities sank into the heart of the race. Future generations forgot the weakness of Zedekiah, as they forgot the faults of his royal companions in misery, and thought of him only as gentle and righteous.[3] A fast is still held on the 10th day of the 5th month to bewail his fall.

The Temple and the Upper Town held out, after the Lower City had fallen, and detained the Chaldæans for another month. Not till then did the townspeople yield, when utterly overpowered. The Temple was defended to the very last, the bravest of the warriors left, perishing vainly in its courts. All classes, indeed, fought with desperation. Young men and women, veterans past their prime, and not a few who were stooping with years, fell with their faces to the hated foe.[4] The storming of a town, or, indeed, any of the wild and infamous scenes of war, have in all ages been the same.

[1] Ezek. xix. 9. [2] Jer. lii. 31. [3] Jos., *Ant.*, X. vii. 5. [4] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17.

> "The gates of mercy, *then*, *are* all shut up,
> And the flesh'd soldier, rough and hard of heart,
> *Ranges*, in liberty of bloody hand,
> With conscience wide as hell." [1]

But, at last, all resistance was crushed, and Jerusalem lay at the mercy of Nebuchadnezzar.

The defence had, however, been too resolute, the rebellion too troublesome, to leave any hope of pity. Such a focus of revolt must be ruthlessly destroyed. The town was given up, therefore, to plunder, and then burnt; the mansions of the rich and the lowly dwellings of the poor, sharing the same fate.[2] The walls, moreover, were levelled with the ground.[3] Nebuzaradan had been left in command, and he had no mercy. The last month's defence had infuriated him. The worst calamity that could overtake a nation in antiquity was inflicted on the conquered; their temple was burnt to the ground, and the remnant of the garrison, and of the inhabitants of both sexes,—those, perhaps, excepted, who, like Jeremiah, had belonged to the party counselling submission to Nebuchadnezzar—carried off to the Chaldæan camp to await their doom. Everything worth taking had been brought out of the sanctuary before it was set on fire; the metal work of all kinds, which was of too great an amount to weigh, and the sacred utensils; some of them from Solomon's time, forming the special booty.[4] The poorer classes, in town and country, were contemptuously left undisturbed; only those whom it seemed worth deporting, as slaves or for the harem, being, apparently, carried off. Hence, besides those who had escaped beyond the reach of the enemy, and waited

[1] Henry V. [2] Jer. xxxix. 8; lii. 10. [3] Jer. lii. 14.
[4] 2 Kings xxv. 13-17. Jer. lii. 17-23.

their departure to return, a large proportion of the peasantry remained, to keep the land from reverting to desolation. The immediate appointment of a Jewish governor over them, shews their numbers to have been considerable. The Great King, while determined to crush all rebellion, had no desire to turn one of his provinces into a wilderness.[1]

The campaign over, Nebuchadnezzar set up his throne of judgment. Marched to Riblah, the final crowd of prisoners were brought before him. Among these were Seraiah, the high priest, grandfather or great-grandfather of Ezra ;[2] Zephaniah, his deputy,[2] whom we have more than once met in the story of Jeremiah's life ;[3] the keepers of the temple gates, who were dignified priests,[4] next in rank to Zephaniah ; the commandant of the garrison, who had held out for a month after the fall of the Lower Town ; seven of the confidential advisers of Zedekiah, members of the oligarchy who had forced him to his ruin ; the chief scribe of the local militia, from which all fighting men were drawn—an officer like our adjutant-general ; and, with them, sixty survivors of the gallant band which had fought to the last.[5] All these were at once put to death. The rest were added to the long train of earlier captives, and marched off to Babylon. At the beginning of the siege, as has been said, 3,023 persons had been seized and led away to the Euphrates ; during its progress 832 had been added to the number ; but how many were taken at the fall of the city is not told. All its sufferings, however, had not finally crushed the spirit of the nation ; for it was

[1] 2 Kings xxv. 12. Jer. xxxix. 10 ; lii. 16.
[2] Ezra vii. 1. 1 Chron. vi. 14. Ewald, vol. iii. p. 807. Jer. lii. 24.
[3] Jer. xxi. 1 ; xxix. 25 ; xxxvii. 3. [4] Jer. lii. 24.
[5] 2 Kings xxv. 18-21. Jer. lii. 24-27.

found expedient, four years later, to carry off 745 prisoners, in addition to all deported before.[1]

In the midst of these overwhelming disasters, Jeremiah remained not only unharmed, but protected. He had, long before, prophesied the ultimate downfall of Babylon,[2] but this was not known. His services, in counselling surrender to the Chaldæans, on the contrary, must have been in all mouths. Orders were therefore issued by the Great King, himself, to see that he was cared for. Set free from the court of the guard, he was given into the care of Gedaliah, a prominent member of the Chaldæan party in Jerusalem, who had been left in the country to govern it, for Nebuchadnezzar. Under his protection the prophet retired to Anathoth, and lived quietly among the remnant of the inhabitants.[3]

[1] Jer. lii. 28-30. The temple was burned in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Kings xxv. 8. The seventeenth and eighteenth years must therefore have been the first and second of the siege.

[2] I have assumed that the prophecies of Jeremiah against Babylon were uttered before the fall of Jerusalem, but, perhaps, they may have been given forth in Egypt, when the prophet was beyond the arm of the Great King. In any case Babylon was in its glory when its doom was thus predicted.

[3] Jer. xxxix. 11-14.

CHAPTER VII.

THE "LAMENTATIONS" OF JEREMIAH.

THE survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem, left in Judah after the banishment of their fellow-countrymen to the Euphrates, seemed, for the time, overwhelmed by the calamities that had befallen their nation. The Temple they had thought invulnerable, was burnt to the ground; Jerusalem, in which they had gloried as "the joy of the whole earth," was a waste of blackened ruins. The town gates seemed to have sunk into the ground;[1] the roads, once thronged, lay untravelled; no groups of citizens discussed gossip or business; even the walls were thrown down, and jackals haunted the Sacred Hill![2]

That such crushing disaster should have found varied expression in the verses of contemporary poets was in keeping with the genius of the race. For ages past, every great event in their national history, whether glorious or sorrowful, had been commemorated in lyrics, handed down from generation to generation. The defeat of Pharaoh, the triumph over Sisera, the death of Saul and Jonathan, the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom, and the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, had been sung in poems known to every Hebrew child. So, now, was it to be with the crowning catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem, carrying with it, as it did, the temporary extinction of the Jewish

[1] Lam. ii. 9. [2] Lam. ii. 8; i. 4; v. 18.

State. The seventy-ninth Psalm[1] seems to preserve to us such an outburst of religious and patriotic emotion; a wail, one might say, from the bleeding bosom of the nation!

'LXXIX. 1. Elohim! the heathen have thrust themselves into Thy inheritance;
They have defiled Thy holy temple! They have laid Jerusalem in ruins!
2. They have given the corpses of Thy servants as food to the birds of heaven;
The flesh of Thy Hasidim[2] to the wild beasts of the earth!
3. They have poured out their blood like water round Jerusalem, and no one buried them!
4. We have become a reproach among our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

"5. How long, Jehovah, wilt Thou be angry? Forever? Will Thy wrath burn thus, fire-like, (for evermore)?
6. Pour out Thy wrath on the heathen, who do not know Thee;
On the kingdoms that do not call upon Thy name!
7. For they have devoured Jacob: they have laid waste his pastures.
8. Oh, remember not against us the sins of our forefathers;
Let Thy tender mercies speedily come to us, for we are brought very low!

"9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the honour of Thy name!
Save us and forgive[3] our sins, for Thy name's sake.
10. Why should the heathen say, 'Where is their god?'
May the revenge of the blood of Thy servants, which has been shed,
Be made known among the heathen, before our eyes!

"11. Let the groans of those lying in chains come before Thee:
According to the greatness of Thy might[4] preserve Thou those appointed to die;[5]

[1] Delitzsch assigns Ps. lxxiv. and lxxix. to the time of Antiochus, 2 Macc. viii. 1-4 (c. B.C. 167). Moll thinks Ps. lxxix. refers to the destruction of the Temple, B.C. 588. So also does Dr. Kay. The fact is, the dates of the Psalms in most cases are conjectural. Cheyne thinks them Maccabean, and, indeed, there seems little doubt of their being so, but they suit the time of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the city, no less than a later age.

[2] = afterwards, to "Zealots."

[3] Literally, "cover" then "forgive"—"accept an expiation for," etc.

[4] Literally, "arm."

[5] Literally, "sons of death."

12. And render back to our neighbours, sevenfold, into their bosom,[1]
Their reproach, with which they have reproached Thee, O Lord!
13. So we, Thy people, and the flock of Thy pasture,
Will thank Thee for ever, and will speak forth Thy praise to all generations!"

The eighty-third Psalm may also be a remembrance of this sad time.[2] It specially dwells on the hostility shewn to Judah by the neighbouring peoples, who should have helped her in her straits. Instead of doing this, they had joined the enemy against her.

"LXXXIII. 1. Elohim! give Thyself no rest: be not silent: be not still, O El!
2. For, lo, thine enemies rage loudly; they that hate Thee carry their heads high!
3. They have planned crafty schemes against Thy people;
They have consulted together against those who are under Thy protection:
4. They say, 'Up! let us destroy them from among the nations,
That the name of Israel be no more remembered!'

"5. For with one heart have they consulted together; they have made a league against Thee.
6. The tents of Edom and of the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagarenes;[3]
7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre:
8. Geshur,[4] also, has joined itself to them: it has lent its arm to the sons of Lot.

"9. Do to them as Thou didst to Midian;
As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the torrent-stream Kishon;[5]

[1] Vol. v. p. 347. **Ps. lxxix. 12, 13; lxxxiii. 1-9.**

[2] It has been assigned by different critics to the Maccabean age, that of Nehemiah, that of Jehoshaphat, and that of Nebuchadnezzar. It appears to suit the last period as well as any other, though the mention of Amalek, unless introduced by the license of poetry, seems to hint at an earlier date.

[3] These races were all more or less tent dwellers, living in the regions south and east of Judah.

[4] Lagarde. The Hebrew has Assyria, but a very small change is required for the emendation in the text.

[5] Judg. v. 21.

10. They were destroyed at Endor,[1] they lay like filth on the ground.
11. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb;[2]
All their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,[3]
12. Who said, in their day, 'Let us take possession of the pastures of Elohim!'[4]

"13. My God, make them like whirling dust; like stubble before the wind!
14. As fire burns the *yaar*, as flame kindles the mountain forests,
15. So chase them with Thy storm; overwhelm them with Thy tempest!
16. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Thy face, O Jehovah;
Let them be confounded and overwhelmed for ever;
17. Let them be put to shame[5] and perish, that they may know
18. That Thou—whose name is Jehovah; that Thou, alone,
Art the Highest over all the earth!"

It is, however, in the short series of elegiac poems, known in our English Bible as "The Lamentations of Jeremiah," that we realize the intensity of the sufferings which Jerusalem had to endure before its fall, and the bitterness and sorrow with which its citizens lamented its fate. In the Hebrew text no author of these compositions is named, but a very old tradition ascribes them to Jeremiah. Already, in the Septuagint translation, made in the second and third centuries before Christ, the statement is prefixed to the Book, that "It came to pass, after Israel was taken captive, and Jerusalem made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping, and lamented this Lamentation over Jerusalem," and to this the Vulgate[6] adds, "in bitterness of heart, sighing and crying." The Arabic version quotes the words of the Septuagint, and the Targum begins with the statement that "Jeremiah the prophet and great priest" was the

[1] Near Tabor. Judg. v. 19. **Ps. lxxxiii. 10-18.** [2] Judg. vii. 25.
[3] Judg. viii. 5. [4] Pastures or "homesteads" of Elohim.
[5] Literally, "grow red." [6] Fourth century after Christ.

author. It is only in recent times that critics have questioned the uniform belief of the Jewish and early Christian Church, and ascribed the Lamentations to some other author.[1] Nothing that is urged, however, need shake our confidence in these touching laments being the production of the great prophet. Near the Damascus gate, on the north side of Jerusalem, a "grotto," which, in reality, is an old quarry, is still shewn, as the spot where he is fancied to have composed them, but it is clear that the rock, at one time, extended to the city wall. In fact, as said, it is an ancient quarry, created by the stone having been slowly cleared away, from outside the city gate, till the excavation pierced a hundred feet into the knoll still rising, in a long, low swell, over it. There are vast cisterns under the "grotto," the roof of the largest borne up by square pillars of stone, and both the roof and sides plastered over, to make them water-tight. The water in this tank is excellent, and in great quantity, having a depth of forty feet; the reservoir thus affording a good illustration of the labour expended to collect surface water, where springs are so scarce. Before the cave is a garden, planted with fruit trees, and separated from the road by a low stone wall. In this garden a range of stone mangers was found, in 1873, dating from the time of the Crusaders, and shewing that the old Hostelry of the Templars once stood on this spot. A Mohammedan family has a cottage in

[1] Ewald supposes Lamentations was written by Baruch, or some other of Jeremiah's disciples, and Bunsen follows him as he does generally. Naegelsbach thinks that Jeremiah was not the author. Thenius fancies that different poets wrote different chapters. This Reuss opposes, ascribing the Book to some unknown composer. But the grounds of this scepticism as to Jeremiah's authorship seem slight when closely examined. Nor is it a matter of any serious moment who was the inspired author. The Book dates from immediately after the siege of Jerusalem, whoever wrote it. The question is curious, but of no real practical weight.

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the mouth of the grotto, and the top of the knoll, above, is a Mohammedan burial-ground, so that the family live below the graves. The spot is interesting in many ways, for, according to Rabbinical tradition, its old Jewish name was "The House of Stoning," so that it is, very probably, the place where the first martyr Stephen met his death. Still more, the knoll is remarkably like a skull in shape, and has been thought, on this, among other grounds, the veritable Calvary on which our Lord was crucified. I clambered up to the graveyard, and found the ground thick with weeds, and entirely neglected, but, as I stood on it, I noticed that the road to the north passed so close below, that a great multitude might have crowded on it, or near it, in full view of the three crosses, if this were the scene of the Redeemer's death. Any one, moreover, might speak, from the road, to the sufferers, or mock and taunt them, if, like the chief priests and the rabble, they were inclined to do so.[1] But whether this tradition respecting the "grotto" be correct or not, the "Lamentations" shew, in every verse, the signs of fresh and irrepressible sorrow, as if the scene still lay beneath the eyes of the poet, and the events commemorated were still agitating the heart. Nor is it any valid objection that the form of the different poems of which the book consists appears artificial. The first, second, third, and fourth chapters are written in verses, each of which commences with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, the third chapter consisting of verses of three lines, each beginning with the same letter, while the order of two of the letters is reversed in the second, third, and fourth.[2] The fifth, though not

[1] There are other grounds for thinking this knoll is really Calvary, but I reserve them for their more fitting place, in my volume of "Hours" on the Gospels.

[2] The letters Pe and Ayin (פ and ע).

alphabetical, is composed in twenty-two verses, the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. But no one ever thought of challenging the authorship of a hymn, because the versification was peculiar. As a help to memory, the alphabetical structure may have been of great use; or it may have been chosen as best suited for a theme deserving,



WAILING PLACE AT THE WALLS OF THE TEMPLE, JERUSALEM.

above all others, to be enshrined in a measure apparently esteemed in the writer's day.

The "Lamentations" are still read yearly by the Jews, to commemorate the burning of the Temple. Every Friday, Israelites, old and young, of both sexes, gather at the "Wailing Place" in Jerusalem, near the south-west corner of the Old Temple grounds, where an ancient wall, 52 yards in length, and 56 feet in height, is still revered as a memorial of the sanctuary of the race. Nine courses

of huge stones, one 16 feet long, another 13, are crowned by 15 rows of stones of smaller size, but what is above ground is little to what is buried, for 70 feet of rubbish lie heaped over the ancient surface, at the spot where the mourners gather. It may be, that some stones of the Temple destroyed by the Chaldæans still remain in their places, but they must be buried deep, under the wreck of the second and third temple, especially the third, thrown down by the Romans, when the ancient city finally perished. It is a touching sight, nevertheless, to watch the line of Jews of many nations, in their black gaberdines, as a sign of grief, lamenting aloud the ruin of that House whose very memory is still so dear to their race, and reciting the sad verses of "Lamentations," and suitable Psalms, amidst tears, as they fervently kiss the stones. On the ninth of the month Ab, nearly our July, this dirge, composed about six hundred years before Christ, is read aloud in every synagogue over the world.

The first poem describes the miseries of Jerusalem and Judah during and after the siege.

"I. 1. **A**h, how she sits there, lonely,[1] the town once so rich in people;
How is she who was great among the nations become like a widow!
The queen of the lands[3] around—how has she become a poor slave!
2. **B**itterly weeps she by night—tears hang on her cheeks,
None has she to comfort her of all those who loved her;
All her friends have betrayed her and turned to be her foes.
3. **G**one into exile is Judah—worn down by sorrow and slavery,[4]
Finding no rest where she now sits among the heathen.

[1] Emptied of her inhabitants. **Lam. i. 1-3.**

[2] **Lam. i.** The dark type shews the succession of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the verses.

[3] Literally, "provinces," perhaps in allusion to the other provinces of Babylon, or to the former empire of Israel.

[4] Her long sufferings at the hands of Assyria, Egypt, and Chaldæa.

All her pursuers came up with her (the hunted hind), when her way closed in before her.[1]

4. **D**esolate, the roads to Zion mourn; no throngs now come to her feasts;
All her gates are desolate; her priests sigh;
Her maidens are led away,[2] and she herself is in bitterness;
5. **H**er[3] foes have become her masters: her enemies enjoy quiet prosperity,
For Jehovah has sunk her in trouble for her many transgressions.
Her children are led away captive by the oppressor.
6. **V**anished from the Daughter of Zion is all her glory;
Her princes are come to be like deer that find no pasture,[4]
So that they fled, no longer swiftly strong, before their pursuers.
7. **Z**ion[5] thinks sadly of the days of her misery and forced wanderings,
Of all her pleasant things that she had in the old days,
Before her people fell into the hand of the adversary, and she had no helper.
The oppressors saw her, and mocked at her calamities.[6]
8. **H**einously has Jerusalem sinned; therefore has she become an abhorrence.
All who once honoured, despise her, for they have seen her shame;
She, herself, also sighs, and turns away her face.[7]
9. **T**ainted and foul are her skirts, for she had not thought of the sure end of her sins,[8]
Therefore she sank thus wondrously, and has no one to comfort her:
'See, O Jehovah,' cries she, 'my sorrow; how proudly the foe deals with me.'
10. **Y**ea, he stretched out his hand over all her ancient treasures.
She has seen the heathen enter her sanctuary;[9]
Them, whom Thou hast commanded never to come into the congregation.
11. **C**raving for bread, all her people wearily sigh;

[1] Literally, "between the straits," or narrows, from which escape was impossible. **Lam. i. 4–11.**

[2] Septuagint by a slight change of the Hebrew. The rendering "afflicted," in the A. V., from the Hebrew, if right, may refer to their no longer having a share in the religious festivities. Exod. xv. 20. Judg. xxi. 19–21. Ps. lxviii. 25.

[3] Soft H. [4] A reference, perhaps, to the flight of Zedekiah and others.

[5] Hebrew, Jerusalem. [6] Not, at her "Sabbaths."

[7] Literally, "turns backwards." [8] Deut. xxxii. 29.

[9] The Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, as part of the besieging army, had entered even the Holy of Holies for plunder. Deut. xxiii. 3, 4. Ps. lxxix.

They gave their dearest things away for food, to keep them alive.[1]
'See, Jehovah, and behold, how I, (Jerusalem,) am despised!'

"12. **L**ittle, seems it to you, all ye passers by the way?[2] Behold and see,
Is any sorrow like that inflicted on me,
Me, whom Jehovah has troubled in the day of His fiery wrath?
13. **M**y bones hath he filled with fire from on high; it glows through them.[3]
He has spread a net for my feet; He has driven me[4] into it (like a hunted deer),
He has made me desolate, and sick at heart all the day.
14. **N**ow is the yoke of my sins bound on me by His hand;
Twisted into strong bonds, they are come on my neck; He has bowed down my strength;
Jehovah has given me into their hands, before whom I cannot resist.
15. **S**lighted[5] by Jehovah have been all my mighty men in my midst;
A solemn feast was proclaimed against me—to crush my young braves;
Jehovah has trodden, as in a wine-press, the virgin daughter of Judah.
16. **A**t[6] these things my eyes weep—my eyes, running with tears,
For they who should comfort me, they who should quicken me to life again, are far from me.
My children are in consternation, for the foe has prevailed!
17. **P**leading hands are stretched out by Zion, yet has she no comforter.
Jehovah has commanded that those round Jacob[7] should be his foes;
Jerusalem has become a loathing among them.

"18. 'T**r**uly[8] Jehovah is only righteous, for I have rebelled against His word;
Hear, therefore, all ye nations, and behold my sorrow.
My maidens and my young men are gone into captivity.
19. **C**oldly did my lovers betray me when I called to them;
My priests and my elders perished of hunger in the city,
Seeking for food to bring back their life.
20. **R**ise and behold, O Jehovah, how deep is my grief; my soul[9] glows within me.

[1] Literally, "to bring back their life." [2] **Lam. i. 12-20.**
[3] Ewald, by an emendation.
[4] Literally, "turned me back into it when I was trying to escape."
[5] Thus, Gesenius and De Wette. "Surrendered," "given up," Keil and Ewald.
[6] **A** for Ayin in the Hebrew alphabet. We have no letter exactly similar.
[7] The nations round Judah. [8] The **T** should be **Ts.**
[9] Literally, "my inner parts."

My heart beats quick [1] in my bosom, for I have greatly rebelled;
The sword makes me childless without; within, there is death.
21. **S**ighing [2] aloud 'I have no comforter,' my trouble is heard;
All my foes have learned of my sorrow; they are glad Thou hast caused it;
But Thou bringest on the day Thou hast foretold, when they will be as I am.
22. **T**o Thy throne rise all their wickedness!
Do to them what they have done to me, for all my transgressions:
For many are my sighs, and my heart is faint.'"

A lament over the Divine judgments on the city, and the desolation of Judah, and a touching supplication on their behalf, succeed.

"II. 1. **A**h! how has Jehovah covered the Daughter of Zion with His anger, like a cloud!
He has cast down the glory of Israel from heaven to the earth,
And has not remembered His footstool in the day of His wrath!
2. (**B**lasted and) destroyed are all the homesteads of Jacob by Jehovah, nor has He pitied them:
He has thrown down, in His wrath, the strongholds of the Daughter of Judah;
He has cast them to the ground; He has dishonoured the kingdom and its princes.
3. **G**rimly fierce, He has cut off every horn [3] of Israel;
He has drawn back His right hand before the enemy,
And burned up Jacob, like flaming fire that consumes all round it.
4. **D**rawn has He His bow, like an enemy; standing (to aim) with his right hand, like a foe;
And has slain all that was pleasant to the eye;
He has poured out His fury like fire in the tent of the Daughter of Zion.
5. **H**e, Jehovah, has become like a foe: He has destroyed Israel;
Destroyed all her castles; broken down all her strongholds,
And heaped up groans and sighs on the Daughter of Judah.
6. **V**iolently has He destroyed His Temple [4] (in its sacred grove), as if it had been a common garden; He has destroyed the place of His Feasts.

[1] Literally, "turns," "is greatly moved." **Lam. i. 21-22; ii. 1-6.**
[2] Should be **Sh.**
[3] Every means of defence.
[4] Literally, "Tent," or "covert."

Jehovah has caused feasts [1] and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion.
And rejected in His fierce anger both king and priest.
7. (**Z**ealous against us), Jehovah has cast aside His altar; He has profaned His sanctuary;
He has given the walls of her castles into the hand of the foe.
They raised a wild noise in the House of Jehovah, as if it had been one of our festivals!
8. (**H**e), Jehovah, had purposed to level the wall of the Daughter of Zion:
He stretched out the measuring line: He did not hold back His hand from destroying.
He made rampart and wall to lament—sunk in ruins together.
9. (**T**orn down or burnt), her gates have, (as it were), sunk into the ground; He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes are among the heathen; the Law is no more.
Even her prophets obtain no longer a vision from Jehovah.
10. **I**n silence, the elders of the Daughter of Zion sit on the ground;
They have cast dust on their heads; they are girded with sackcloth;
The virgins of Jerusalem have sunk their heads to the earth.
11. **C**losed by much weeping, my eyes fail; my whole body glows;
My liver is poured on the earth, at the destruction of the Daughter of my people,
For the children and sucklings perish for hunger in the streets of the city;
12. **L**ying in the streets of the city, dying, like the mortally wounded,
They cry to their mothers, 'Where is the corn and wine?' [2]
Their souls breathing themselves out, meanwhile, on their mother's bosom.

"13. (**M**aiden) daughter of Jerusalem! what (message of comfort) shall I give thee? to what shall I liken thee?
What shall I compare to thee, for thy consolation, O virgin daughter of Zion?
Thy trouble [3] is great as a sea; who can heal thee?
14. **N**othing but lies and deceit [4] have thy false prophets spoken to thee;
They have not laid open thy sin, to prevent thy being led into captivity;
They prophesied to thee only false 'burdens,' deceitful and ruinous.

[1] "Appointed seasons." **Lam. ii. 7-14.**
[2] These two represent food and drink generally.
[3] Literally, "breach," or wound."
[4] Literally, "whitewash," "plaster," "pretence."

"15. **S**till, as men pass by, all clap their hands together at thee in scorn;[1]
They hiss, and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem.
'Is this the city,' say they, 'that men call "The Perfection of Beauty," "The Joy of the whole earth"?'
16. (**P**leased[2] at thy fall) thine enemies open their mouths wide at thee;
Hissing (in contempt) and gnashing their teeth (in rage), they say, 'We have destroyed her!
This is the day for which we hoped—now we have found and seen it!'

"17. **A**ll that Jehovah had determined has He done;
He has fulfilled His word, ordered in days of old—He has destroyed without pity;
He has let the foe rejoice over thee; he has raised the horn of thine oppressors.
18. **T**heir[3] heart cried (in sorrow) to Jehovah!
Let thy tears flow down day and night like a stream,[4] O wall of the Daughter of Zion!
Give thyself no rest;[5] let not the apple of thine eye cease weeping!
19. **C**ry out in the night, rising up; in the beginning of the watches[6]
Pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord;
Lift up thy hands to Him, for the life of thy children,
That perish for hunger at every corner of the streets.
20. **R**egard, O Jehovah, and behold, to whom hast Thou thus done!
Shall women eat the fruit of their womb—the babes of their nursing?
Shall the priest and the prophet lie slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?
21. **S**hall the boy and the gray-haired man lie dead on the ground in the streets?
My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword;
Slain by Thee in the day of Thy wrath, slain without pity!
22. **T**hou callest my terrors round me, like the crowds on the day of a feast;
None of my children escaped or could flee, in the day of the wrath of Jehovah;
Those I had nursed and brought up has my foe destroyed."

[1] **Lam. ii. 15-22.**
[2] In the 2d, 3d, and 4th chapters the Hebrew letter **Pe** comes before **Ayin.**
[3] **T** should be **Ts.**
[4] A mountain rain-torrent.
[5] In prayer. Literally, "grow not cold."
[6] In the beginning of each watch. In Jeremiah's time there were three night watches of four hours each. **Exod. xiv. 24. Ps. lxiii. 6.**

Now follows a touching poem.[1] It is written in verses of three lines, each verse beginning in all its lines with the same letter; and the successive verses following the Hebrew alphabet in regular order—perhaps to impress the poem more easily on the memory. It is put in the mouth of an imaginary singer—a survivor of the siege.

"III. 1. **A**las! I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath!
2. **A**las! He has guided and led me through darkness—not through light!
3. **A**gainst Me has He turned, again and again, His hand, all the day long;
4. **B**ruised[2] has He my flesh and my skin; He has broken my bones;
5. **B**uilt up, round about me, poison and travail,
6. **B**rought me into darkness, like the long dead!
7. **G**irded me round has He, with a wall, that I cannot get out, He has made my chain heavy.
8. **G**ives no ear to my prayer when I cry and call.
9. **G**irded round my paths with a wall of squared stones; He breaks up my paths.
10. **D**read is He to me as a bear, or a lion hidden in secret.
11. **D**umb with terror has He made me; driving me from my ways, and letting the wild beasts tear me in pieces.
12. **D**rawing His bow, He has set me as a mark for the arrow.
13. **H**e has let the sons of His quiver[3] pierce into my loins.[4]
14. **H**eld in derision am I by all my people: their scoff all the day.
15. **H**e has filled me with bitterness and made me drink wormwood.
16. **W**ith gravel stones has he broken my teeth; He has strewn me with ashes.
17. **W**ithheld has He, my soul, from peace: I have forgotten prosperity.
18. **W**ithered for ever, said I, is my strength, and my hope from Jehovah.

"19. **S**et[5] before Thee my affliction and my misery; the wormwood and the poison;

[1] **Lam. iii. 1-19.**
[2] Literally, "rubbed away."
[3] *i.e.*, arrows.
[4] Literally, "kidneys."
[5] Here and in the next two lines the first letter should be **Z**. "Set before" is used as = "remember."

20. **S**et before my soul are they; it is bowed down within me;[1]
21. **S**eeing therefore I thus keep them before me, I will hope (for God's mercy)."

Now follow words of contrition and hope.

"22. **W**holly[2] of Jehovah's mercy is it that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.
23. (**H**is mercies) are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.
24. **H**e, Jehovah, is my portion, says my soul: therefore will I hope in Him.
25. **T**o those who cling to Him, Jehovah is good: to the soul that seeks Him;
26. **T**o work patiently for the salvation of Jehovah is good;
27. **T**o bear the yoke (of trouble) in his youth is good for a man.
28. **I**f Jehovah bow him with sorrows, let him sit alone in silence;
29. **I**f, perchance, there be hope, let him kiss the dust meekly;
30. **I**f even it bring reproach, let him give his cheek to the smiter.
31. **C**ast off the Lord may, but not for ever!
32. **C**ause grief He may, but He also pities, in the multitude of His mercies.
33. **C**ontrary to His heart is it to afflict or to grieve the children of men.

"34. **L**ord! to tread in pieces under one's feet all the prisoners of the earth—
35. **L**ord! to turn aside the right of a man in his dispute before the face of the Most High—
36. **L**ord! to defraud a man in his cause—is not pleasing to Thee!"[3]

Having uttered these words of submission and hope, the prophet breaks out afresh into expressions of suffering; his grief being still irrepressible, notwithstanding his trust in the justice and goodness of God. All things are in His hands. Evil as well as good is by His appointment: the former coming on man for his sin; the latter, as the gift of heavenly bounty. But amidst all the trials of his country,

[1] **Lam. iii. 20-36.** [2] **Wh** should be **H**.
[3] I have changed the person in this verse from the third to the second, to meet the exigencies of the alphabetical structure.

the Throne of Grace is ever open ; to that let the mourners humbly repair ! Nor let them complain if they receive chastening from the Lord ; the just punishment of their offences !

"37. **M**an never was, who could speak, and it came to pass, if the Lord had not commanded; [1]
38. **M**ust not evil as well as good proceed out of the mouth of the Most High?
39. **M**an, left alive, must not sigh, but reform; for why sigh over deserved punishment of one's sins ?
40. **N**o, let us, rather, prove and search our ways, and turn to Jehovah!
41. **N**ot only our hands, but our hearts, also, be lifted up to God in the heavens!
42. **N**ot one of us but has sinned or rebelled, and Thou hast not pardoned.
43. **S**ore offended, Thou hast put on wrath, like a garment, and punished us; slaying us without pity.
44. **S**upplication cannot pass through to Thee, for Thou hast hid Thyself in a thick cloud.
45. **S**ordid offscourings and refuse hast Thou made us, in the midst of the nations.
46. (**P**roudly) have all our enemies opened their mouths at us.
47. **P**anic alarm, and the pit of destruction,[2] have we round us, devastation and ruin.
48. **P**ouring down from my eyes, flow streams of tears, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.
49. **A**lways, without intermission: tears trickle down without ceasing;
50. **A**lways, till Jehovah look down and behold us, from heaven.
51. **A**t the thought of all the daughters of my city my eye troubles my heart."

The prophet here interrupts the narrative of the sorrows of his people, by recalling his own sufferings at their hands.

"52. **T**erribly [3] have my enemies hunted me without cause, like a bird.

[1] **Lam. iii. 37-52.** [2] In which wild animals are taken.
[3] **T** should in this and the two following lines be **Ts.**

53. They tried to cut off my life in a pit[1] and put a stone on its mouth.[2]
54. The waters flowed over my head, so that I thought, 'I am lost.'
55. Calling on Thy name, O Jehovah, I cried out of the depth[3] of the cistern:
56. 'Close not thine ear to my voice, to my sighing, to my cry.'
57. Come near, didst Thou, in the day when I called, and saidst, 'Fear thou not.'
58. (Righteous) Lord, Thou didst defend my life;[4] Thou didst save it!
59. Regarded hast Thou, O Jehovah, my wrongful treatment—judge Thou my cause!
60. Revenge taken on me by them, Thou sawest it all; and all that they plotted against me!
61. Shame cast on me by them, Thou didst hear, O Jehovah; all that they plotted against me!
62. Sayings of those that rose up against me, and their murmured schemes for my hurt, all the day.
63. See, at their sitting down together and their rising up, I am their scoff.
64. Take vengeance on them, O Jehovah, according to the works of their hands;
65. Their heart, do thou blind it[5]—let Thy curse rest upon them;
66. Turn on them and destroy them, in wrath, from under the heavens of Jehovah!"

These three laments not having calmed the emotion of the prophet at the remembrance of the awful sufferings of his people, he adds a fourth, in which the miseries endured in the siege are painted in the most touching detail. Comparing the citizens to fine gold and to the stones of the sanctuary,[6] he bewails their fate under the figure of the dimming of the one and the throwing down of the other.

[1] The same word as that for the pit or cistern in which Jeremiah was confined. **Lam. iii. 53-66.**

[2] A reference, apparently, to the putting the heavy stone lid over the cistern in which Jeremiah was imprisoned. Jer. xxxviii. 6.

[3] Literally, "lowest depths." [4] Literally, "plead the suit for my life."

[5] Literally, "cover;" hence, "blind." [6] Zech. ix. 16.

"IV. 1. **A**h! how is the gold grown dull![1] the finest gold changed!
How are the holy stones thrown down, at every corner of the streets.[2]
2. **B**urghers of Zion, the noblest; men to be weighed against finest gold,
Ah! how they are treated as if they were common earthenware pitchers, the work of a potter's hands!
3. (**G**aunt) she-wolves[3] offer the breast to their young and suckle them;
But the daughter of my people has grown heartless as the ostrich in the wilderness, (which forsakes its young when alarmed by the hunter).[4]

"4. **D**ried up by thirst, the tongue of the suckling cleaves to the roof of its mouth;
The young children asked bread; no one breaks it to them.
5. **H**ollow-cheeked, those wont to eat dainties wander in the streets,
Those brought up wearing scarlet, are glad to make dunghills their couch.
6. **W**orse is the punishment of the sin of the daughter of my people, than that of the sin of Sodom:
It was destroyed in a moment; the hands of the foe did not rest on her (as on us).
7. **Z**ion's princes shone white as snow; they were whiter than milk;
They were more ruddy in body than corals; their form was lovely as that of a well-cut sapphire.
8. (**H**ideous now!), their faces blacker than darkness (with famine), they are not recognized in the streets;
Their skin cleaves to their bones; it is dried up like wood.
9. **T**hose slain with the sword are better off than their neighbours, that perish of hunger!
For these die, gnawed through by famine, for want of the fruits of the field.
10. **I**nfants, and these their own, have been boiled by mothers, till then full of pity.
Such babes were their food, in the downfall of the daughter of my people."

Jerusalem has been utterly destroyed.

[1] **Lam. iv. 1-10.** [2] Lam. ii. 19.

[3] See note on the word "tannin," vol. v. p. 43. It means really any fierce beast, or monster; here, nearly all understand "the she-wolf" to be intended.

[4] **Tristram, p. 238.**

"11. Carried out to the uttermost by Jehovah is His fury; He has
poured forth His burning wrath,[1]
And kindled a fire in Zion that has devoured even its foundations.
12. Little would the kings of the earth, or the inhabitants of the
world[2] have thought,
That the foe and the oppressor would enter into the gates of Jerusa-
lem!"[3]

The sins of the prophets and priests were the great cause of the fall of the city. A strong faction, led by members of these orders, confident in the speedy return of their brethren from exile, had raised fierce tumults during the siege, to prevent surrender; many citizens perishing in the contests thus excited.

"13. Mainly for the sins of her prophets and for the iniquities of her
priests,
Who shed the blood of the just in her midst,[4] (has this catastrophe
come on her).
14. Numbers of them wandered blindly through the streets, soiled
with blood,
So that no one could touch their clothing.
15. 'Stand back!' men cried out to them, 'ye unclean!' 'stand
back! stand back! Touch us not!'[5] Yet they strove,[6] and
roamed about, saying,
'The exiles will not sojourn long among the heathen.'
16. (Proud ones), the glance of Jehovah scattered them: He no longer
paid respect to them: and so
The citizens regarded not the faces of priests, and had no reverence
for the Elders.

[1] Lam. iv. 11-16. [2] An Oriental hyperbole for "any one."

[3] The Jews thought their capital impregnable, in spite of its having been repeatedly spoiled by enemies. Perhaps the defeat of Sennacherib led to this fancy; but the belief that Jehovah would defend it as "His seat," the locality of His Temple, was undoubtedly the main ground of confidence in its security.

[4] Jer. vi. 13; xxiii. 11; xxvi. 8; etc.

[5] They were warned off like lepers, Lev. xiii. 45. They should have raised the cry, but not doing so, the people raised it. This verse shews that the law of the leper, in Leviticus, was then well known.

[6] The Hebrew word used here may be derived from a verb meaning "to strive," as well as from one meaning "to flee away," and the sense seems much better.

17. As for us, (the besieged), our eyes pined away, looking in vain for help, (from Egypt or elsewhere),[1]
Our weary watching has all been for a nation that could not help us!
18. The foe (from their siege works) kept their eyes on our very footsteps, so that we could not walk in the streets;
Our end is near, our days are completed; yea, our end is come!
19. Keener in their swiftness than the eagles of heaven were our pursuers;
They hunted after us on the mountains: they lurked for us in the desert.
20. (Royal Zedekiah), the breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of Jehovah, was caught in their pits,[2]
Of whom we said, 'Under his shadow shall we live among the nations.'"

The treacherous part taken in this time of trouble by Edom, a nation related to Judah, had sunk into the heart of the Hebrews.

"21. Sing and be glad, O daughter of Edom, inhabitress of the land of Uz!
But the cup will come to thee, also! Thou, too, shalt be drunk (with the shame of ruin): thou, too, shalt expose thyself to contempt!
22. Thy punishment[3] is over, O daughter of Zion: Jehovah will no more carry thee away into captivity:
But He will hereafter visit thee for thy iniquity,[4] O daughter of Edom: He will lay bare thy sins!"

The last poem in this series is an earnest prayer to God not to forsake His people for ever. The agonies of the siege, and of the storming of Jerusalem, had been already painted in vivid colours, but they had so burnt themselves into the memory of the prophet, that he cannot refrain from reciting them once more. This done, however, he lifts his voice to Jehovah, the one sure Help and Saviour, and closes

[1] Lam. iv. 17-22.
[2] As before, a figure from the pits in which wild beasts were taken.
[3] Literally, "thy iniquity," the cause being put for the penalty.
[4] Same word in Hebrew as is translated "punishment" in the line above.

his lament by leaving the fate of his nation to the infinite pity of his Heavenly King. The artificial structure of the verses, beginning with successive letters, is now discontinued, but their number is the same as that of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

"V. 1. Remember, Jehovah,[1] what has happened to us; behold, and see our reproach!
2. Our inheritance is made over to foreigners, our houses to aliens.
3. Orphans are we, without a father; our mothers are as widows.
4. We drank our water only for money; we got our fuel only for payment.
5. We were pursued, with the hand of the foe on our necks: we were worn out and had no rest.
6. We gave ourselves up[2] to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, for enough to eat.
7. Our fathers sinned and are not: we bear the punishment of their sins.
8. Slaves—(the court eunuchs of Egypt and Chaldæa)—have ruled us: no one delivers us out of their hands.
9. We reap our grain[3] at the risk of our lives, from the sword (of the Arabs) of the desert.
10. Our skin burns like an oven with the feverish blast of famine.
11. The women of Zion were dishonoured: the maidens in the towns of Judah.
12. Princes were hung up by the hand (on the cross): the faces of the Elders received no respect.
13. They took our strong young men to grind (their mills); our lads staggered under loads of fuel.
14. Elders no longer gathered at the gate: young men gave up their songs.
15. The joy of our hearts has ceased: our dancing is turned into lamentation.
16. The crown of our head (our honour) has fallen off: woe to us that we sinned!
17. For this, our heart is faint: for this, our eyes grow dark—
18. For Mount Zion, because it lies waste: the foxes run over it."

[1] **Lam. v. 1-18.** [2] Literally, "gave the hand," as a sign of submission.
[3] Literally, "get our bread."

Then follows an earnest prayer.

"19. Thou, Jehovah, reignest for ever: Thy throne,[1] from generation to generation.
20. Why wilt Thou forget us for ever? why wilt Thou forsake us so long?
21. Lead us back to Thee, O Jehovah, that we may truly return to Thee: renew our days as of old!
22. Thou wilt not surely wholly forget us? Thou wilt not be angry with us beyond measure?"

Thus wailed the genius of Hebrew poetry over the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem! Other cities and countries have had their minstrels to lament their public sorrows, but the national elegies of the Jew alone have spread among all races of the earth and remain fresh after twenty-five centuries. Nor are they even yet without deep and practical interest, recording, as they do, the catastrophe that awaits any community, however highly favoured, which forgets that public and private righteousness, alone, secures permanent prosperity.

[1] Lam. v. 19-22.

CHAPTER VIII.

EDOM AND THE NATIONS ROUND.

THE psalms and laments in which Judah sighed over its national ruin became sacred among all the widely-dispersed race, from their first appearance, and at once deepened the grief over the fall of their country, and made it abiding. But with tearful regret were mingled other feelings. The "delightsome land" had ceased to be theirs; in part, as we have seen, through the treachery of the communities round it, many of whom were kindred in blood to the sufferers.[1]

Edom had even sent troops to assist the Chaldæans in the siege, and these had shewn a bitter and remorseless hostility, greater than that of the army they aided. The fiercest mutual hatred had, indeed, for centuries, thrust apart the brother races of Jacob and Esau. The refusal of a passage through Mount Seir to the Hebrews, under Moses, in their march from Egypt, nine hundred years before, had entailed the long sufferings of the wilderness life, and had never been forgotten. Fierce war had raged between the two peoples since the time of David's temporary conquest of Edom. Under Joram, Amaziah, and Uzziah, in succession, it had been virtually a Jewish province, till the reign of the weak Ahaz.[2] The destruc-

[1] Ezek. xxv. 3, 8, 12, 15; xxvi. 2.
[2] 2 Sam. viii. 14. 2 Kings viii. 20. 2 Kings xvi. 6. 2 Chron. xxviii. 17.

tion of Jerusalem, however, had at last given the Edomites a chance of revenge, and they had indulged it to the uttermost. More cruel than the Chaldees, they had demanded that the city should be razed to its foundations.[1] After the final assault, they had eagerly helped to plunder it, and had openly rejoiced when the citizens were carried off into slavery, boasting loudly of their share in the catastrophe.[2] Still worse; they had cut off the retreat of such as had escaped massacre at the storming, and were making their way to the friendly shelter of Egypt. To destroy these, they had beset the southern roads, killing or taking prisoner as many fugitives as possible; the captives being afterwards handed over as slaves to the Chaldæans.[3] Nor had the depopulation of Jerusalem and Judah contented them. They had taken possession of a large part of the Hebrew territory.[4] No wonder that, henceforth, an inextinguishable hatred, deepening with each generation, filled every Jewish bosom at the very name of Edom.[5]

A striking illustration of this deadly abhorrence of the race survives in the short prophecy of Obadiah, the briefest of all the books of the Old Testament. We know nothing of the personal history of the writer, and even the period at which the oracle that bears his name was first uttered, has been disputed. As in the case of Joel, some have fancied him the earliest of the prophets; others, the latest; a lesson enforcing diffidence in historical criticism. That there are various coincidences with Joel may be seen in any reference Bible, and there are passages more or less parallel with others in Jeremiah.[6] But we know how fre-

[1] Ps. cxxxvii. 7. Ezek. xxxv. 11. Lam. iv. 21. Jer. xlix.
[2] Obad. 11-13. [3] Obad. 14. [4] Ezek. xxxvi. 5.
[5] Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i. p. 246.
[6] See a reference Bible.

quently one prophet borrowed from another, sometimes indeed from one whose age and name are unknown,[1] and it is in Obadiah's case a question which was the borrower. The omission of the name of the Chaldæans, or the exile to Babylon, proves nothing in so short a composition, nor can much stress be laid on the position of the book after Amos, in the Hebrew Bible, since Canticles stands next after Job, and Joel, which the new critics allege to be very late, is put before Amos. The balance of probability seems strongly in favour of the prophecy having been uttered by a spectator of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the conduct of Edom which it denounces.[2] Obadiah may have been one of those carried off to Babylon, or possibly he may have been a fugitive in Egypt or in Phœnicia; in any case, he seems to have been a later contemporary of Jeremiah.

Apart from the malignity shewn by the Edomites, at the final crisis of the Hebrew state, there were special grudges between the two races on subordinate grounds. The people of Mount Seir, always vaunting and truculent, stirred the jealousy of their brother-race. They boasted, not without reason, of the wisdom of their great men,[3] and had all the insolence of wealth, secured by the position of their territory in the route of commerce from north

[1] See Isa. chaps xv. and xvi.

[2] Obadiah has been supposed by different critics to have lived before Joel, or under Joash, Jehoram, Uzziah, or Pekah; some even assigning him so late a date as B.C. 312. That widely separate centuries should thus have been honoured, shews the utter uncertainty of the subject. But the concurrence of such men as De Wette, Bleek, Rosenmüller, and Ewald, in thinking the oracle refers to the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, is ample vindication for assuming that it does so. Keil gives its date as B.C. 885. Bleek, as after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans. The *Dict. of the Bible* assigns it to about the year 585. Hitzig and Steiner make it as late as the end of the fourth century before Christ. Riehm wavers between B.C. 885 and B.C. 585.

[3] Obad. 8.

to south. Their haughtiness was, moreover, increased by the strength of their position, for they inhabited the range of Seir; that is, the "rough" hill, on the east side of the Arabah, or depression south of the Dead Sea; a region of lofty and tangled mountains, which stretches south, towards the Red Sea, in a succession of wild granite, porphyry, and sandstone masses, seamed with countless intricate valleys, not even yet explored. Rising steeply on the west, it sinks gradually into the desert on the east. Full of caves, the hills were originally inhabited by the Horites, or cave men, but that race was driven out by the Edomites.[1] Selah, the capital,[2] known afterwards as Petra, consisted mainly of dwellings hewn out of the sandstone of the defile in which it lay; the many rich colours of the rock giving the whole place great beauty. Its ruins, if the word may be used, shew splendid temples, and a great amphitheatre cut out of the living rock; but these are of a comparatively late period.[3] The approach to it was by successive ascents, dangerous and laborious in the extreme to an invader, through difficult and easily-defended mountain passes and narrow gorges, so that it was regarded by its citizens as almost beyond the reach of successful attack.

The wisdom, prosperity, haughtiness, and fancied security of the Edomites, however, were doomed to a terrible eclipse. Josephus tells us[3] that Nebuchadnezzar, some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, turned his arms against Moab, Ammon, Southern Syria, and Edom, and utterly crushed them for the time, though Edom, at least, survived, as a vassal territory, under the Jews and Romans, till after the fall of Jerusalem. Then, at last, the curse of Obadiah and other prophets was fulfilled.

[1] Deut. ii. 12-22. [2] See vol. iv. p. 417. [3] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 7.

The prophecy opens with an outburst of rejoicing from the remnant of the Hebrews, at the news that vengeance was about to overtake the race they so fiercely hated.

"1. We heard a rumour from Jehovah,[1] a messenger was sent among the nations, to say—'Up, let us rise against Edom in war!' 2. 'Behold,' (says Jehovah), 'I will make thee small (O Edom) among the nations; thou shalt be utterly despised. 3. The pride of thy heart has deceived thee, thou who hast thy dwelling in the clefts of the rocks; thy seat on the mountain heights; who sayest in thy heart, 'Who shall cast me down to the ground?' 4. If thou wert to soar as high as the eagle, and to set thy nest among the very stars, I will hurl thee down from thence, says Jehovah!"

Nothing could resist a foe whom Jehovah had appointed as His instrument. Ordinary raids of plundering tribes might be beaten off, with only a partial loss, but the attack of the terrible Chaldæan would bring utter ruin.

"5. If a thieving horde came upon thee, or night-plunderers (attracted by thy wealth),[2] they would carry off only as much as satisfied them;[3] (but, now,) how utterly art thou destroyed! If grape-gatherers came on thee, would they not leave some gleanings? 6. (But, now,) how is Esau searched through (in every part)! How are his most sacred chambers ransacked!"

Chaldæa would plunder it utterly, nor would it have a friend or ally to help it in its distress.

"7. (When thy fugitives flee from the invader, to neighbouring friendly states), all these thy allies[4] will drive them back again, from their borders; the communities at peace with thee[5] will betray thee,

[1] **Obad. 1-7.** [2] Diod., xix. 94, 95.

[3] Eichhorn translates these lines: "If thieves or midnight robbers came on thee, how quietly mightest thou have awaited them; would they have stolen more than they could carry off?" Jer. xlix. 9, from which the verse is taken, runs thus in the A. V.: "If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not have some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough."

[4] "Men of thy league." [5] "Men of thy peace."

turning against thee and overcoming thee; thy mercenaries[1] will spread a snare for thy feet, but thou wilt not mark it.[2] For thou shalt have no understanding left."

The boasted wisdom and martial spirit of Edom were to pass away.

"8. Shall it not be in that day,[3] says Jehovah, that I will destroy (the wisdom of) 'the wise'[4] out of Edom, and understanding from the mountain of Esau? 9. And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed (by the want of counsel), that every man may be cut off from the mount of Esau by the sword."[5]

Their hostility to Jacob—the Hebrew people—has deserved no happier fate.

"10. For thy wicked dealing towards thy brother Jacob, shame will cover thee, and thou shalt be destroyed for ever. 11. In the day when thou stoodest aloof, while aliens carried away his substance, and the barbarian pressed through his gates and cast the lot on Jerusalem, (to share its plunder and prisoners), thou wast (like) one of them. 12. Thou shouldst not have feasted[6] thine eyes on the (evil) day of thy brother, the day of his calamity; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the sons of Judah, in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have opened thy mouth bitterly in the day of their distress. 13. Thou shouldst not have pressed through the gate of My people in the day of their trouble, nor have feasted thine eyes on their misery in the day of their calamity, nor have laid thy hand on their substance in the day of their affliction. 14. Neither shouldst thou have stood at the crossroads, to kill those that had escaped (from the Chaldæan), nor have given up the fugitives to their foe, in the hour of their anguish.

"15. For the day of Jehovah is near for all nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your work will be paid back on your own

[1] The Hebrew has only "thy bread," but "men of" seems to be understood from the preceding clause. By men eating the bread of Edom, only mercenaries can be meant. The passage is very obscure.

[2] Literally, "there is no noticing of it." [3] **Obad. 8-15.**

[4] Eliphaz, the chief disputant with Job, was a Temanite. Job ii. 11. Gen. xxxvi. 15, 34.

[5] Literally, "by slaughter." [6] Literally, "do not."

head! 16. For as you (sons of Judah) have drunk[1] (the cup of My wrath), on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink it henceforth; they shall drink and swallow it down, and be as if they had never been."

Like all the other prophets, Obadiah sees light even in the darkest sky. His people may have been crushed for the time, but they will, one day, be gloriously re-established on Zion.

"17. But on Mount Zion shall they gather that escape, and it shall be a sanctuary, and the house of Jacob will (once more) enter into their possessions. 18. And the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau will be stubble (before them), and they shall set it on fire and consume it: Jehovah has spoken."

The Hebrews—both Jacob and Joseph—will be victorious on all sides.

"19. And they of the south country (the Negeb) will take possession of the mountains of Esau, and they of the Shephelah (the hill slopes over the maritime plain) will take the land of the Philistines; and they will possess the hill country of Ephraim, and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead, (beyond the Jordan).

"20. And the captives of the host of the sons of Israel (who will then have returned), will take the land of the Canaanites, as far as Sarepta,[2] and the captives of Jerusalem who are at Sepharad[3] will take possession of the cities of the south country.[4] 21. And deliverers will rise up on Mount Zion, to judge the mountain of Esau,[5] and the kingdom will be Jehovah's."

[1] Kleinert and Keil render this passage: "For as you (Edomites), have held your carousings on My holy mountain," etc. But this seems hardly so good as the sense given in the text. **Obad. 16-21.**

[2] Zarephath=Sarepta—the present Surafend, between Tyre and Sidon, on the coast. 1 Kings xvii. 9.

[3] Sepharad. Graetz would read Arad: a place on the Phœnician coast. Keil thinks of Sparta: others suppose Sardis meant, since it is called Sepharad (C P a R a D) in old Persian inscriptions. But Schrader very justly hesitates to accept this, on various grounds, and looks rather to Babylonia, where the locality may one day be identified. *Keilinschriften*, p. 285.

[4] The Negeb.

[5] The overthrow of Edom by the Chaldæans is implied in Jer. xlix. 7; Ezek. xxxv.,

Thus spoke Obadiah, repeating, in effect, the curse denounced against Idumea by Amos[1] and Isaiah[2] about 200 and 150 years, respectively, before the Chaldæan destruction of Jerusalem. But the indignation in Judah excited by the cruel desertion of the nations pledged to support her in her final struggle, and especially by the base malignity of Edom, stirred the hearts of his brother prophets no less strongly. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, widely apart as they were, felt alike towards the betrayers of their people, and launched equally terrible utterances against them. It is impossible in all cases to fix the exact dates of these prophecies, but those of Jeremiah at least, from his age,[3] must have been spoken very soon after his countrymen had been carried off to Babylon. The doom of Edom, pronounced by him in the name of Jehovah, was terrible.

"XLIX. 7. Concerning Edom—it began—thus saith Jehovah of Hosts:[4] Is there no longer wisdom in Teman ?[5] Has counsel perished from the understanding ones ? Has their wisdom vanished ? 8. Flee! turn! seek the deep caves (of your hills) for dwellings, (or the depths of the desert), ye inhabitants of Dedan,[6] for I am about to bring

comp. Jer. xxv. 9, 21, and Mal. i. 3. John Hyrcanus finally crushed the Edomites and compelled them to submit to circumcision, B.C. 129 (Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. ix. 1); Alexander Jannæus subdued the last of their clans (Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. xv. 4), and Rome finally destroyed the nation. Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, IV. ix. 7.

[1] Amos i. 11. Vol. iv. p. 206. [2] Isa. xxxiv. 1–17. Vol. iv. p. 414.

[3] Jeremiah was between 60 and 70 at the taking of Jerusalem.

[4] **Jer. xlix. 7-8.** The resemblances to Obadiah are to be noted. The one is evidently copied, in some clauses, from the other. [5] See vol. v. p. 330.

[6] Dedan, which is always mentioned with Sheba, was the wide region of Arabia, north of the latter; gradually reaching, indeed, by the advance of the population, to the southern limits of Edom. (Jer. xlix. 8.) It is curious that we find another Dedan, and also another Sheba, among the descendants of Abraham. (Gen. xxv. 3.) This apparently rises from the peoples of both Dedan and Sheba having gradually spread northwards, first in caravan journeys, and finally in permanent settlements, among the tribes descended from Abraham, who lived in these parts; till the whole became a mixed race to which the common names still clung. (Schrader, in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*. Steiner, in Schenkel's *Bibel Lexicon*.)

on Esau his destruction: the time of his visitation! 9. If grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? if a thieving horde, by night, they would take only what they could carry off.[1] 10. But I will strip Esau bare; I will lay open his secret places, so that he shall not be able to hide himself. His seed shall be spoiled, and his brethren, (the related tribes), his neighbours, will perish.[2] 11. (Thy men having all been destroyed), leave thy fatherless children (O Edom); I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me! 12. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, those to whom it belonged not to drink the cup (of My wrath—My own people) must drink it, and shalt thou go unpunished? Thou shalt not go unpunished, but drink it thou shalt! 13. For I have sworn by Myself, says Jehovah, that Bozrah[3] shall become a horror, a contempt, a desolation, and a curse, and all its towns shall be perpetual wastes."[4]

The destruction of Edom being a righteous judgment from Jehovah, the prophet goes on to speak of the command to the Chaldæans to invade it as coming from above.

"14. I have heard a rumour which is from Jehovah; a messenger has been sent to the nations, saying, 'Assemble and come against it; arise to war!' 15. For, lo, I will make thee small among the nations, (O Edom!), and despised among men. 16. The fear of thee,[5] and the pride of thy heart, have deceived thee, O thou who dwellest in clefts of the rocks,[6] and sittest fast on the heights of the hills. Though thou buildest thy nest high as the eagle, I will drag thee down from thence, saith Jehovah, 17. and Edom shall be a desolation! Every one who passes by it will be dismayed,[7] and will hiss, (in scorn and mockery), at all the plagues it has borne. 18. As Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbour towns, were destroyed utterly, saith Jehovah, so no man will dwell in Edom any more: no man will sojourn in it."

The ascent of the Edomite hills by the invader is now described.

[1] What was enough, to them. **Jer. xlix. 9-18.**
[2] Literally, "are gone," or "he is gone."
[3] Vol. iv. p. 415.
[4] Dry places, or deserts.
[5] Literally, "thy terribleness."
[6] See p. 140. The word for "rock" is Selah—a name of Petra.
[7] The noun and the verb in these sentences are the same—dismayed may therefore be read "filled with terror, or fear."

"19. Behold! he will come up (against thy hill cities), as a lion comes up from the thickets of the bed of the Jordan, against the flocks on the rock pastures of the Negeb,[1] and I will make Edom run forthwith (like a scattered flock) from her rocks, and I will appoint over it him who is chosen (by Me). For who is My equal, and who will challenge My doings? And who is the shepherd (or leader of men) who will stand before Me?

"20. Therefore, hear the decree of Jehovah, that He has made against Edom, and His purposes that He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman.[2] Verily, they shall drive them before them—weak ones of the flock as they are! Verily their pasture itself will be dismayed at them.[3] 21. The earth trembles at the noise of their downfall; a cry will rise, the sound of which will be heard even to the Red Sea.[4] 22. Behold, the invader will mount up, and fly, and spread out his wings like an eagle, over Bozrah, and the heart of the mighty men, in that day, will be like the heart of a woman in her trouble!"

Not less sternly did the curse against Edom sound from the banks of the Chebar. Ezekiel proclaims it in few but terrible words.

"XXV. 12. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[5] Because Edom has taken revenge on Judah, and made herself greatly guilty by doing so: 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will stretch out My hand against Edom, and root out man and beast from it, and make it a desert; from Teman (in the north) to Dedan (in the south), they shall fall by the sword. 14. I will carry out My revenge on Edom, by the hand of My people Israel. It will fare with Edom according to My anger and My fierce wrath, and they shall know My revenge! saith the Lord Jehovah."

Edom, however, did not stand alone as the object of the denunciations of the prophets; all the peoples who had betrayed Judah and vented their hatred against her,

[1] Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 43. **Jer. xlix. 19-22.**

[2] Wilton shews, from Josh. xv. 1, that Teman must have been the northern part of the range of Seir, next Judah. *The Negeb*, p. 123.

[3] This passage is repeated in chap. l. 45.

[4] Literally, "The weedy sea." Edom extended to the Red Sea in the days of her glory. 1 Kings ix. 26.

[5] **Ezek. xxv. 12-14.**

were alike condemned.[1] Calamities terrible as those of Jerusalem were to come upon all its neighbours in turn.

The doom of the Philistines pronounced by Jeremiah, before "Pharaoh (Hophra?) smote Gaza"—an incident otherwise unrecorded—opens with a figure suggested by the great river Euphrates, on which Babylon stood. The awful power of the Chaldæans is compared to an overwhelming flood, coming from the North.

"XLVII. 2. Thus saith Jehovah:[2] Behold, waters rise from the north[3] and swell to a flood, overflowing the river banks, and will deluge the open country and all in it, the town and its inhabitants; and the men will lament aloud; all the people of the land will shriek in terror. 3. At the loud beating of the hoofs of his war-horses, at the bounding of his chariots, at the rattling of their wheels, the fathers, (in their flight), will not look back to their children, (to save them); so terror-stricken will they be[4] 4. because of the day which then comes, to destroy all the Philistines, and cut off from Tyre and Sidon every one left to help them.[5] For Jehovah will destroy the Philistines—the remnant of the people who came from Caphtor.[6] 5. Baldness (the sign of mourning)[7] has come on Gaza; Askelon is destroyed, and the rest of the Philistine plain.[8] How long (O Philistia) wilt thou cut thyself (for sorrow)![9]

"6. O thou sword of Jehovah, how long wilt thou not cease? Back

[1] Though not expressly stated, it is in itself probable that the Philistines had taken advantage of the sore straits of Judah to gratify their hatred of her. Ezek. xvi. 27–57. Amos i. 6. Isa. ix. 12; xi. 14. Zeph. ii. 5. Obad. 19. Joel iii. 4. Zech. ix. 5.

[2] **Jer. xlvii. 2–6.**

[3] In Isa. viii. 7 the same figure is used of the Assyrian army.

[4] Literally, "the powerlessness of their hands will be such."

[5] The Philistines hired themselves out as mercenaries.

[6] See notices of Caphtor in the indexes of the different volumes.

[7] Jer. xvi. 6.

[8] The word is Aimek—a long broad sweep, like the Plain of Esdraelon or the Ghor of the Jordan. The Septuagint has "the remnant of the Anakim." Num. xiii. 33. Deut. ii. 10. 1 Sam. xvii. 4. 1 Chron. xx. 5–8. For "the Philistine" in the text, the Hebrew has "their."

[9] The "remnant" of Philistia, for it is only a remnant. Psammetichus having sorely weakened them by his long siege of Ashdod (Herod., ii. 157), sit in deep grief, like women who pull out their hair, and, in agonizing despair, cut themselves, as was their custom in such cases. Jer. xvi. 6; xlviii. 37.

to thy scabbard! Rest! Be still! 7. But how can it rest, since Jehovah has given it a mission against Askelon and the sea-coast (of Philistia)? There has He given it its charge!"

Ascalon is on the sea-shore, about twelve miles north of Gaza, lying in a semicircle, at a spot richly fertile, amidst surrounding sand, from the presence of copious springs. The lower limestone beds on which the wall of central hills rest, beyond the rolling Philistine plain, here, at least fifteen miles broad, crops out on the shore in low bluffs, buried, for immemorial ages, except on their sea face, by the restless sand drift. Bending back from the very edge of the waves, at Ascalon, they sweep round, in a great amphitheatre, till they again dip their foot in the sea, about a mile farther north; each end of the arc, and, indeed, its whole circuit, towering high enough to lift the forts and castles, once looking down from them, far above the level of the plain outside, over which their sentinels kept grim watch and ward. The Ascalon of Bible times has, long ago, been buried deep, below the rich soil of the little oasis, which the abundance of water has created, over the whole interior of this natural rampart, and so has it been, even with the Ascalon of Roman days. All that remains above ground is only as old as the Crusades, but great numbers of marble pillars, built into the walls of these mediæval strongholds, speak of the splendour of the city which yielded such spoil. Indeed the soil is, everywhere, full of the wreck of the great past. The spade and the pick have, for ages, been busy digging out statues, columns, squared stones, and every other form of booty, to burn for lime, or build into modern structures, or silently appropriate. Great numbers of marble pillars lay waiting removal when I was there, and I met numbers of camels plodding along

to Gaza, with loads of Ascalon stones. There is no longer any town, or even a hamlet; the few persons who spend their lives in making the spot beautiful with rich gardens, the produce of which is sold to the neighbouring towns, coming, apparently, from these to ply their vocation. The never-resting sand, however, must give them constant anxiety, for it has drifted, in vast sheets, up the slopes of the bluffs, all round the semicircle, and has even buried part of the garden land, while, outside the walls, the trees of what were orchards only a few years ago, are scarcely to be seen above the flood of yellow desolation which stretches far and near.

Far away, in Babylonia, Ezekiel repeated a similar malediction.

"XXV. 15. Thus says the Lord Jehovah,[1] because the Philistines acted revengefully, and wreaked that revenge with foul contempt,[2] to destroy Judah, in their long-standing enmity; 16. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will stretch out My hand over the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cretans,[3] and destroy the remnant of them that is on the sea-coast. 17. And I will take a great revenge on them with fierce chastisements, and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I bring my revenge upon them."

Moab, among other kingdoms, was the object of fierce denunciations. Isaiah had prophesied its doom long before, in the words of a still older seer.[4] Jeremiah now lifted up his voice proclaiming its approaching destruction, as Balaam, Amos, and others, had done, from the time of Moses. But since the reign of Mesa, and the death of Ahab, with a brief interval during the reign of Jeroboam

[1] Ezek. xxv. 15-17.
[2] The word comes from a root meaning "to stink."
[3] Literally, Cherethim, or Crethi. 1 Sam. xxx. 14. Zeph. ii. 5.
[4] Isa. chaps. xv. and xvi.

II., the doomed land had enjoyed independence, and instead of paying tribute to the Hebrews had harried their borders remorselessly.[1] Jeremiah now, however, sees it at last utterly destroyed.

"XLVIII. 1. Respecting Moab;[2] thus says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel; Woe to Nebo,[3] for it is laid waste: Kiriathaim, 'the double town,'[4] is put to shame, is taken: Misgab, 'the citadel on the height,' is put to shame and broken down.[5] 2. The boasting of Moab is gone! In Heshbon they (the Chaldæans) plot evil against the land: 'Come, let us cut it off from being a nation!' Thou also, Madmenah,[6] will be brought to silence; the sword will pursue thee. 3. (Hark!) a cry from Horonaim,[7] 'spoiling and huge destruction'! 4. Moab is broken to pieces; (the towns), her little ones, cause their cry to be heard to Zoar.[8] 5. They go up the ascent of Luhith with weeping; in the descent of Horonaim the wail is heard, over the ruin (that has come on them). 6. Flee, save your lives, like him who escapes, naked, to the wilderness. 7. Because thou trustedst in thy strongholds and in thy treasures, thou shalt be taken (in war), and Chemosh,[9] (thy god), shall wander forth into captivity; his priests and his princes with him! 8. And the spoiler shall come up upon every

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 20. [2] **Jer. xlviii. 1-8.**

[3] Nebo. The highest peak of the Abarim range near the north end of the Dead Sea, but also the name of a town in Moab, or rather in the territory of Reuben (Num. xxxii. 38), held, in the prophet's day, by Moab. It was taken by Mesa about B.C. 895. The word is derived by Hitzig from the Sanscrit, and rendered by him, "the cloudy heaven;" and hence, he says, there was a god Nebo, after whom the town of the name was called. Sayce, however, more correctly, derives Nebo from Nabi, "a prophet," as if in remembrance of one of the order in ancient times. The village of Nebo may have been on the mountain of the same name.

[4] **Kiriathaim,** the modern Kureiyat. The latter, like Nebo, lay on the east edge of the upland plateau, and the two thus stand for the table-land generally. Kiriathaim was, apparently, between Dibon and Medeba.

[5] Misgab = the height, the citadel. De Saulcy, writing of the neighbourhood of Kureiyat, speaks of extensive ancient ruins, and a circular enclosure, constructed with very large stones, and crowning the summit of a high cliff. Vol. i. pp. 546-555.

[6] A district of Moab famous for its rich soil. Hitzig, 2d ed., translates "Madmen" as in Isa. xxv. 10, "dunghill:" and makes the clause apply to Heshbon—"yea, to dungheaps wilt thou be brought." The corpses of the slain will lie rotting on the face of the earth.

[7] Literally, "the two caves," a town of Moab.

[8] Septuagint. Ewald. Graf.

[9] The national god of Moab. This being the only god anywhere mentioned in connection with Moab, the nation would seem to have been practically monotheists.

town, not one shall escape; the lowland[1] shall be ruined and the table-land[2] be laid waste, as Jehovah has spoken.

"9. Give Moab wings,[3] that it may fly off and get away, (like a bird scared from its nest), for her cities shall be made an uninhabited desolation. 10. Cursed be he who does the work of Jehovah slackly; cursed be he who holds back his sword from blood. 11. Moab has remained from his youth undisturbed; he has lain still, (in his country, like wine) on its lees; he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel[4]—(that is,) he has not gone away into captivity (but has enjoyed prosperity), and hence his taste has remained in him, and his fragrance is not changed.[5] 12. Therefore, behold, days come, says Jehovah, that I will send to him those who will turn him on his side (as they do wine jars), and pour him out, emptying his wine jars, and shattering his flagons. 13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the children of Israel were ashamed of Bethel,[6] their confidence.

"14. (When it will then happen with you as with the weak and unwarlike) how will you be able to say, (any longer), 'We are mighty men and strong for war'? 15. Moab is laid waste; his cities have gone up (in smoke and flame),[7] and his chosen young men are led like sheep to the slaughter-block, says the King, whose name is Jehovah of Hosts.

"16. The destruction of Moab is near at hand, his calamity hastens fast. 17. All ye, his neighbours, bewail him, and all ye who know his name say, 'How is the sceptre of might broken, the rod of power.' 18. Come down from thy glory, thou daughter, inhabitress of (well-watered) Dibon,[8] and sit thirsty on the ground, (captives, waiting to be led away), for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee; he shall destroy thy strongholds. 19. Stand out in the road, O inhabitant[9] of Aroer, and look; ask him that is fleeing, and her that has escaped, 'What has happened?' 20. Moab is put to shame; yea, it is overthrown; howl and cry; tell it in Arnon that Moab is laid waste! 21.

[1] Aimek - the broad sweeps of valley between hills, including perhaps the Ghor of the Jordan. See p. 147.

[2] The Mishor = upland downs, without rock or stones.

[3] **Jer. xlviii. 9-20.**

[4] To remain on its lees improved wine; to be emptied from vessel to vessel, made it tasteless and without fragrance. Its taste and smell were benefited and preserved if it were not poured off its lees.

[5] Moab remained the same in its feelings to other nations—harsh and bitter.

[6] The calf gods of Bethel.

[7] Or, "the spoiler has gone up to his cities."

[8] "Ye inhabitants of Dibon." For a notice of the towns mentioned in this prophecy, see vol. iv. pp. 104-111.

[9] Feminine in the Hebrew for all the populations.

The judgment (of God) has come on the uplands;[1] on Holon and Jahazah and Mephaath, 22. and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblathaim, 23. and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, 24. and Kerioth, and Bozrah,[2] and on all the towns of the land of Moab, far and near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is shattered, says Jehovah!"

The enemy to whom it is committed to carry out the judgments of God is now invoked. He is to hand to Moab the cup of the Divine wrath, and make it drunken, till it reels and falls, the derision of those around.[3] Its pride against Jehovah, in despising Israel, and the violence done to the people of God, by seizing on their inheritance beyond Jordan, and cheering on the Chaldæans in their attack on Jerusalem, have brought on the offender this fierce indignation.

"XLVIII. 26. Make ye him drunken, for he has acted haughtily against Jehovah; (make him drunken) till he fall into[4] his own vomit, and himself become a derision (as he made Israel). 27. Was not Israel a derision to thee, (and, yet, was such a fate deserved)—as if he had been found among thieves? (Thou couldst not have treated him with more contempt had he been so), for, as often as thou speakest of him, thou tossest thy head (in scorn).[5] 28. Abandon your towns and make

[1] Literally, "the land of the Mishor." As in verse 8. See vol. ii. p. 419. **Jer. xlviii. 21-28.**

[2] Of these towns, Dibon lay three miles north of the Arnon: Aroer on the north bank of the Arnon, so that it was on the boundary between the Hebrew territory and that of Moab, but at this time Moab held a large part of the land formerly enjoyed by the tribes beyond Jordan. Holon is mentioned only here, Jahazah seems to have lain to the east of the country, on the edge of the wilderness, and Mephaath was near it. Beth-diblathaim was perhaps north of Dibon. The name means "the house of the two cakes" or "disks," apparently such stones as are still found on the site, round, like millstones, but too large for use as such, and without any hole in the centre. Beth-gamul is only mentioned here, and its position is unknown. Beth-meon was apparently near Heshbon. Kerioth is a synonym of Ar, or Kir, the old capital of Moab. The plural form Kerioth may imply that it included two or more contiguous towns. Bozrah is not identified. The word means "sheepfolds," a fitting name for small communities on these upland pastures.

[3] See a similar figure, chap. xxv. 15.

[4] Literally, "splash into," so as to sound like the beating of the hands.

[5] Matt. xxvii. 39.

your home in the clefts of the rock, ye inhabitants of Moab, and be like the doves which build their nest at the mouth of the hill caves.[1] 29. We (of Judah) have heard of the pride of Moab,[2] for he is insolent exceedingly—his haughtiness, his arrogance, his lofty airs, and the superciliousness of his heart (are known to us). 30. Even I (also) know his insolence, says Jehovah, and the hollowness of his boasting;[3] the lies that he has uttered. 31. Therefore (at the thought of the judgment coming on him for these) I, Jeremiah, shriek in sorrow for Moab, I cry aloud for all its land. There shall be moaning for the men of Kir-heres.[4] 32. O Vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee more than Jazer will (over the wreck of its homes and vineyards); thy shoots reached over the sea, they reached even to the water of Jazer.[5] The spoiler will fall on thy fruit harvest and on thy vintage. 33. Joy and gladness are taken from the Carmel-like field, (so richly fruitful,) and from the (whole) land of Moab, and I will cause the wine to fail from the wine-vats; no one will tread them with joyful cry; their shouting will be no shouting (for gladness, but the cry of war). 34. The cry of Heshbon is heard at Elealeh (two miles off); its voice sounds even to Jahaz;[6] the cry of Zoar reaches to Horonaim and the third Eglath,[7] for even the waters of Nimrim[8] shall be made a waste. 35. And I will destroy from Moab, says Jehovah, him that goeth up to a high place and burns incense to his gods."

Another outburst of lament over the ruin of Moab follows.

[1] Keil translates this phrase, "over the yawning abyss," following Hitzig. But the word for "abyss" is from a root, "to bore through," "to pierce," and thus suits a cave better than a precipice. In verses 43, 44, it occurs three times, and is rendered in each, "*pit*"—apparently a concealed cistern or grain pit. But in the text it must mean a *cave*, since doves breed in such recesses, not in pits.

[2] **Jer. xlviii. 29-35.**

[3] Or, "babbling."

[4] The chief stronghold of Moab. The Kirhareseth and Kirharesh of Isa. xvi. 7, 11, also called Kir of Moab and Kirkhu; see the Moabite Stone. Now Kerak.

[5] Sibmah was, according to St. Jerome, only 500 paces from Heshbon. Jazer was 15 miles north of it. "The sea" is the Dead Sea. The fame of the vines of Jazer was widely spread.

[6] Much farther off, to the south-west.

[7] This is Ewald, Graf, and Keil's reading, on the assumption that there were three towns of that name.

[8] "This is a rich verdant spot at the south-east end of the Dead Sea. It still bears the Arab name of Nimeirah, and here, too, we found traces of the leopard." Dr. Tristram. "Nahr Nimrim" means "the stream of the leopards."

"36. For this, my heart wails[1] like mourning flutes, for Moab; my heart wails like mourning flutes, for the men of Kir-heres; for the abundance they have saved is perished. 37. For every head is bald and every beard shaven (in mourning); slashes are cut on all arms (in grief),[2] and sackcloth is on the loins. 38. Loud shrieks rise from all the (flat) house-roofs of Moab and in her public places, for I have broken Moab (in pieces), says Jehovah, like a vessel in which one has no pleasure."

There will be no escape from the destruction!

"39. They shall shriek aloud, 'Oh! how is our land ruined! How has Moab turned her back with shame!' Thus will Moab be a mockery and a dismay to all his neighbours. 40. For thus says Jehovah, Behold (the enemy) shall swoop down like an eagle, and spread out his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth[3] is taken; the strongholds are captured, and the hearts of the mighty men of Moab are become, in that day, like the heart of a woman in her trouble. 42. And Moab will be destroyed from being a people, because he has magnified himself against Jehovah. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, says Jehovah. 44. He who flees from the fear shall fall into the pit, and he that gets out of the pit shall be caught in the snare, for I shall bring on him, even on Moab, the year of his visitation, says Jehovah. 45. The fugitives stand (worn out) under the shadow of (the walls of) Heshbon,[4] but fire shall break out of Heshbon, and flame from the midst of Sihon, and will consume the border of Moab, and the crown of the head of its haughty sons.[5]

"46. Woe to thee, O Moab! The people of Chemosh are lost! for thy sons will be led away captives, and thy daughters to captivity. 47. Yet I will turn again the captivity of Moab in the end of days, says Jehovah."[6]

Ezekiel, on the banks of the Chebar, was equally stern in his denunciation of the doomed land.

[1] **Jer. xlviii. 36-47.**

[2] "It was a custom among the ancients, and is still common among the Jews, that they cut their arms, etc., in their grief." Jerome, on Jer. xvi. 6.

[3] See verse 24.

[4] A neighbouring city of the Ammonites.

[5] Literally, "sons of tumult," perhaps=warriors.

[6] This prophecy is more or less adapted from other prophecies. Compare this 48th chap. of Jeremiah with Isa. xv. and xvi.; Amos ii. 1-3; Zeph. ii. 8-10, and the words of Balaam, Num. xxiv. 17.

"XXV. 8. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah,[1] Because Moab, like Seir, says, 'Behold, the house of Judah is as the same as all other peoples,' 9. therefore, lo, I will open to the inroads of the Sons of the East—(the Arabs [2])—the border of Moab, from the cities on the one end of it, to the last of the cities, on the other—the glory of the land—Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon [3] and Kiriathaim.[4] 10. with the country of the Ammonites, and will give it to the invaders for a possession, that the Ammonites may no longer be remembered among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments on Moab, and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

In this terrible list of judgments on the enemies of Israel, Ammon was included by both Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The people of God were not to suffer alone. The Divine vengeance would light even more heavily on the heathen, far and near. The word of the Lord, Ezekiel tells us, came again to him, saying:

"XXV. 2. Son of man,[5] turn thy face against the B'nai Ammon and prophesy against them, 3. and say to the sons of Ammon, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou saidst 'Aha' against My Temple when it was desecrated, and against the land of Israel when it was laid waste, and against the house of Judah when it went into exile—4. behold, I will, therefore, give thee to the sons of the East (the Arabs) for a possession, that they may set up their tent villages in thee, and make their encampments in thee; and they will eat thy produce and drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah (thy capital) a browsing place for camels—and the (home of) the B'nai Ammon for a gathering place of herds, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. 6. For thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because thou didst clap thy hands, and stamp (for joy) with thy feet, and rejoice with the deadliest contempt, at (the calamities of) the land of Israel, 7. behold, I will therefore stretch out My hand over thee, and deliver thee for a spoil to the peoples, and root thee out from among them, and destroy thee from among the nations, and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah!"

[1] **Ezek. xxv. 8-11.**

[2] "Sons of the East," the same as our later word "Saracens." The Arabs would overrun and occupy both Ammon and Moab, as has been the case for ages.

[3] These towns were in the territory of Reuben, but in Ezekiel's day were held by Moab. [4] Sir G. Grove thinks Kiriatham, not Kiriathaim, was the original form.

[5] **Ezek. xxv. 1-7.**

The territory of Ammon lay to the north of Moab, to which its people were closely allied by blood. The tribe of Gad had long before received their country as its inheritance, after the defeat of Sihon their king; but the deportation of the eastern tribes by Tiglath-Pileser[1] had enabled them to re-occupy the district, from which, indeed, they had probably never been wholly expelled. Less settled than Moab, the Ammonites had only one city of any size, their capital, Rabbah; the region being generally pastoral. Hereditary enemies of Israel,[2] they would not long have cause for rejoicing at his fall. Like Ezekiel, Jeremiah proclaimed their coming doom.

"XLIX. 1. Concerning the B'nai Ammon,[3] thus says Jehovah: Has Israel no sons (left)? Has he no heirs? Why, then, has Milcom, (the god of the Ammonites), taken the territory of Gad as an inheritance, (instead of Jehovah?) and why do his people dwell in its towns? 2. Because of this, the days come when I shall cause Rabbah of the B'nai Ammon to hear the shout of battle, and it will be made heaps of ruins, and (the small towns round it)—its daughters—will be burned with fire, and then shall Israel dispossess them that took possession of his territory, says Jehovah. 3. Lament aloud, O Heshbon, for Ai,[4] (near thee), is (already) laid waste! Shriek, ye daughters of Rabbah (inhabitants of the little towns near her); gird yourselves with sackcloth; lament, and run hither and thither, behind the rude stone walls of thy *jedars*,[5] for Milcom (your god) shall go into captivity, and with him his priests and his princes. 4. Why gloriest thou in the glens (of thy land), the wealth[6] of thy (chief) valley, (below Rabbah), O rebell-

[1] 2 Kings xv. 29. See vol. iv. p. 275, ff.

[2] Judg. x. 7; xi. 12-32. 1 Sam. xi. 2 Sam. x. and xi.; xii. 26. 1 Chron. xx. Amos i. 13-15. 2 Kings xxiv. 2. 2 Chron. xxvi. 8. 2 Kings xv. 29. 1 Chron. v. 26.

[3] **Jer. xlix. 1-4.**

[4] Not the Ai on the west of the Jordan. Graf suggests "Ar" (Num. xxi. 15).

[5] See vol. iv. p. 230. It is translated in the A.V.—"sheepfolds," "folds," "sheepcotes," "hedges," "wall," and included the dry stone walls used for all inclosures alike.

[6] With Ewald and Graf, I take the participle as a substantive. The Septuagint has Anakim for Amakim (valleys), and is probably right. A remnant of the old gigantic race may have previously held them.

ious daughter, who trustedst in (the lasting possession of) thy treasures, saying, 'Who will come to me' (to attack me)? 5. Behold, I will cause terror to come on thee from all sides,[1] says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, and ye shall be driven out, every man straight before him, no one stopping to rally or gather the fugitives. 6. Yet, hereafter, I will turn back the captivity of the B'nai Ammon, says Jehovah."[2]

Damascus, now an inconsiderable state, under we know not what rule, had brought on itself the same doom as its neighbours, for the same cause. Its fate is thus foretold by Jeremiah.

"XLIX. 23. Hamath[3] is put to shame, and Arpad,[4] for they have heard evil tidings, they are in despair.[5] There is sorrow even on the sea (coast); (like the sea) men cannot rest. 24. Damascus has lost heart and turns to flee, trembling has seized her, anguish and woe like that of a woman in her trouble. 25. Oh! how sad, that the famous, the delightsome city should not be abandoned (by its people) before her fall! 26. Therefore, her young men will fall in her streets, and all her fighting men will be cut off in that day, says Jehovah of Hosts. 27. And I will kindle fire on the wall of Damascus, that will consume the palaces of Benhadad."[6]

The various Arab races, settled and nomadic, in the wide regions between Palestine and the Euphrates, are next arraigned and given over to the visitation of God. The denunciation is directed against "Kedar[7] and the king-

[1] **Jer. xlix. 5-6; 23-27.**

[2] The Rabbis held that the Ammonites returned when some of their race in later times became proselytes to Judaism. Barclay's *Talmud*.

[3] Hamath was at one time under the Hittites, as shewn by Hittite inscriptions found there.

[4] A city 15 miles north of Aleppo, now Ervad. [5] Literally, "they melt away."

[6] Amos i. 4, 14. Ben-Hadad = the son of Hadad, the chief god of Damascus; sometimes called Hadad Rimmon.

[7] Kedar is used here as a general name for all the nomadic tribes of Arabs; Hazor for those dwelling in fixed encampments or villages. The settled Arabs are still called Hadarije, in contrast to Wabarije or tent Arabs; and Hadar = Hazor is the fixed dwelling, in distinction from "Bedù," the open desert. Keil, *Jeremia*, p. 490. Delitzsch, *Jes.*, xlii. 11. The "men" or "sons of the East" are the Arabs as a whole, (afterwards) known as the Napateans or Kedarenes.

doms of Hazor," that is, the Arab villages under different sheiks, "which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote." How long the prophecy had been uttered before its fulfilment, we have no means of knowing.

"XLIX. 28. Up, (O Chaldæans),[1] march against Kedar, and spoil the sons of the East! 29. They (the Chaldæans) shall take their tents and their sheep; they shall carry off their tent-cloths,[2] and all their household utensils, and their camels, and shall raise the (war) shout against them. Fear shall be on every side!

"30. Flee! begone as far as you may! bury yourselves in the depth of the desert, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith Jehovah. For Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has formed a purpose against you, and planned war upon you. 31. Up (O Chaldæans), march against a people living quietly, in (fancied) security, saith the Lord; who have neither gates nor bars (to oppose you), but dwell alone. 32. Their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their herds and flocks a spoil. And I will scatter to all the winds the race that wear their hair shaven at the temples,[3] and I will bring destruction on them from all sides, saith Jehovah. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for jackals, a waste for ever. No one shall live there, no one even sojourn in it."

The last in this list of doomed communities is Elam, the mountainous region on the west of the lower Tigris. The fulfilment of the prophecy, nevertheless, was to be remote; for to Elam, under its king, Cyrus, and to Media, was hereafter given the commission to overthrow Babylon.[4] Under the Persian empire, however, its independence was lost, and it became the seat of the Persian capital, Susa or Shushan. It was in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,[5] that Jeremiah was moved, we do not know on what occasion, to foretell the destiny of this

[1] **Jer. xlix. 28-33.**

[2] The thick, felt-like, rainproof coverings of goat's hair or camel's hair, which Paul employed himself in making. Herzog, vol. v. p. 514; vol. vi. p. 148. The two under layers of coverings of the tabernacle are described by the word used here. Herzog, vol. xv. p. 98.

[3] See vol. v. p. 191.

[4] Isa. xxi. 2.

[5] Jer. xlix. 34. The prophecies in chaps. xlvi., to xlix. and xxxiii., had been uttered about seven years before. **Jer. xlvi. 2.**

country, which seemed to the Jews almost beyond the limits of the habitable world. The prediction runs as follows:

"XLIX. 35. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts:[1] Behold, I break the bow of Elam,[2] (its national weapon), 36. and will bring on it the four winds from the four ends of heaven, and will scatter its people to all those winds, and there shall be no nation to which the dispersed of Elam shall not come. 37. And I will make Elam dismayed before her enemies, and before those that seek her life, and will bring evil on them, the glow of My anger, says Jehovah, and send the sword after them till I have consumed them. 38. And I will set up My throne in Elam, and destroy out of it kings and princes, says Jehovah. 39. Yet in the end of days I will bring back the captivity of Elam, says Jehovah."

[1] **Jer. xlix. 35-39.**

[2] The national weapon, see vol. iv. 452. Sayce thinks that the conquest of Elam referred to was that effected by Teiospes, a chief of the royal clan of the Persians, who appears to have taken possession of Elam during the troublous times that followed the fall of Assyria. The result of this was to make Cyrus an Elamite in education and religion. Sayce, *Fresh Light*, p. 180.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MURDER OF GEDALIAH, AND THE SIEGE OF TYRE.

The state of things in Judah, after the Chaldæan army retired, taking with it long files of captives to Babylon, was gloomy in the extreme. Jerusalem and the Temple lay in ruins, the towns and villages had been burned, and most of the surviving population had fled for the time. The land was not, however, finally abandoned ; for there still remained the bulk of the population, and these, when they came back from their hiding places, formed a considerable community, over which the authority of Babylon must be upheld, to prevent Egypt from taking possession of the country. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, took measures for the organization of a government in Judah.[1]

Among the steady advocates of quiet submission to the Chaldæans, a Jewish noble—Gedaliah, "he whom Jehovah has made great"—had borne a foremost part. As a recognition of this he was now appointed governor of the land. He was the grandson of Shaphan, the secretary of King Josiah, and son of Ahikam who had been sent by that king to the prophetess Huldah, to inquire about the newly-found Book of the Law, and to whom, in the days of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah owed his life.[2] Gedaliah had been no less faithful to the best traditions of the past, or to

[1] The subsequent narrative rests mainly on Jeremiah, chaps. xl., xli. xlii., and xliii.

[2] Jer. xxvi. 24. 2 Kings xxii. 12.

Jeremiah, their greatest living representative. The opinions of the statesman and the prophet were identical in religion and politics, and thus drew them together. To both, the perjury of Zedekiah in his rebellion against Babylon, was the cause of the misery that had overwhelmed the nation; and both might be implicitly trusted to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar.

The state of parties in Jerusalem had been intimately known to the Chaldæans, and hence the storming of the city, which had overthrown the State, was the signal for Jeremiah recovering his freedom. In return for his firm support of Chaldæa, orders were issued to the general in command at Jerusalem, to take him under his protection and shew him every favour. He was at once, therefore, removed from confinement in the court of the watch, and commended to the good offices of Gedaliah, though free to go where he liked. Led first to Ramah, the Chaldæan headquarters, about five miles north of Jerusalem, and so far on the way to Babylon, the manacles hitherto on his wrists were there struck off, and he was invited to choose whether he would go with honour to Babylon, or remain behind in his ruined native country. Knowing, however, that if he went to the East he should never see Judah again, he preferred to remain amidst scenes which, even in their desolation, were so near his heart. Gedaliah had taken up his abode at Mizpeh, a little south of Ramah, and to him the prophet turned, receiving from the Chaldæan general, when he left him, besides other substantial proofs of regard, a supply of provisions, necessary for his support till the next harvest.

A better day seemed now dawning. The restless Egyptian party was in exile, and Gedaliah had every

quality his position seemed to demand. All the population were committed to his charge, and this remnant of the nation might hope slowly to regain a modest prosperity by his aid, under the shadow of the Great King.

The news of the new settlement of affairs soon spread. An amnesty, which promised the best results, had been proclaimed to all who gathered round Gedaliah. Numbers of men throughout the country had formed themselves into armed bands, to harass the Chaldæans during the siege, but had been forced to flee to the fastnesses of the distant hills—to Edom, Moab, and Ammon—after the city was taken. Further resistance was hopeless. Their leaders, therefore, gladly sent in their submission and that of their followers, to the new governor, himself a Jew, in answer to his overtures of protection and oblivion of the past, if they proved henceforth loyal subjects of Nebuchadnezzar. They might settle where they liked in the depopulated parts of the country, taking possession of the abandoned orchards, vineyards, and fields. A great many, attracted by such offers, flocked in from all sides.

Among other leaders of these rude bands, however, was one destined to ruin the fair hopes of the community. Ishmael—ominous name—a connection of the old Hebrew royal family, possibly even a descendant of Elishama, the son of David,[1] but perhaps a son of Zedekiah or one of the later kings—was still the head of a company which, after the siege, had taken refuge in Ammon. Women from that district were found in the royal harem at Jerusalem,[2] and thus Ishmael, on his mother's side, may have been connected with the Ammonite court. Jealous of the elevation of Gedaliah, and familiarized by the war with deeds

[1] Jer. xli. 1. 2 Kings xxv. 25. 2 Sam. v. 16. [2] 2 Kings xi. 1.

of blood, Ishmael was a ready tool for any crime glossed by ambition or a shew of patriotism, and ere long agreed with Baaltes, the king of Ammon, to assist in carrying out a dark plot against Gedaliah. To kill him probably seemed to the Ammonite the surest way of bringing final ruin on the hated Jews, who, if allowed to recover themselves, might once more claim the territory beyond the Jordan. That he had consented to take office under the Chaldæan, was, perhaps, the pretext by which Ishmael hushed his scruples. A plot was accordingly arranged, by which Ishmael should go to Mizpeh and feign submission to the new governor, with a view to his murder; and unfortunately the frank and open nature of the intended victim made it only too easily successful.

Gedaliah's house seems to have stood by itself, shut off by a high wall, with a courtyard enclosing the deep well, or reservoir, dug three hundred and fifty years before, by Asa, to supply water to his stronghold raised at Mizpeh against Baasha.[1] Hither Ishmael and some of his men repaired, after various leaders with their bands had already done so, and, like them, he doubtless took an oath of allegiance to the Great King, pledging himself to be his loyal subject. Free access to the governor was naturally granted to chiefs who had thus given in their adhesion to the new state of things; but this confidence, though justified by the conduct of all but Ishmael, gave him a fatal opportunity of carrying out his treason. Hoping to win other leaders to join him, he broached the subject to them, but they determined to thwart the black design if possible. Two brothers, Johanan and Jonathan, both prominent chief-

[1] 1 Kings xv. 16–22. 2 Chron. xvi. 1–6. The stones had been brought from Ramah, and the fortress was designed to bar the road to Jerusalem.

tains, with Seraiah, at the head of a band from Netophah, a little north of Bethlehem; and Jaazaniah, from Maachah, in the far north, near the springs of the Jordan,[1] waited on the threatened man and warned him of his danger. But Ishmael had played his part too well, and had lulled his victim to a false security. "It was impossible such a man could be false; they slandered him." A secret interview obtained by Johanan was as unsuccessful. Knowing the ruin Gedaliah's death would bring, he offered to kill the conspirator secretly, but permission was refused.

Ishmael arrived about a month after the fall of the city, to pay homage to Gedaliah, but had subsequently left again for Ammon.[2] He reappeared, however, thirty days later, on the third[3] of Tisri[4]—nearly our October—with ten "princes" or "dignitaries,"[5]—perhaps officers of the disbanded Jewish army—each, probably, attended by his followers. New adherents so high in rank seemed a great acquisition, and were naturally welcomed by the governor in a feast made on their account; but it was a fatal act of courtesy. The unsuspecting victim was liberal, as Josephus tells us, with his wine, and all went merrily, till, at a given signal, he and every one in the mansion were struck down by Ishmael and his confederates; the massacre being carried out with such swift secrecy that no alarm was given outside, and no one escaped to tell the tale. The gray-haired Jeremiah, often a guest at Gedaliah's table, was fortunately absent. So complete had been the preparations, that a guard of honour of Chaldæan soldiers, on duty round the house, were surprised and cut down to a man, and the residence made a ghastly scene of death,

[1] Conder's *Handbook*, p. 254.
[2] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 3.
[3] So says tradition.
[4] Jer. xli. 1. Zech. vii. 5.
[5] Rabbai.

without the townspeople, outside, having the least suspicion of any treason, till two days after all was over. But the crimes of Ishmael were, as yet, only half finished. The houses of Mizpeh, built on a hill-side, stood high above the country around; that of Gedaliah rising clear of the others, perhaps on the highest terrace, so that it overlooked the road from Shechem and Samaria to Jerusalem. Watching from this vantage ground, Ishmael, on the second day, saw a band of travellers approaching. As, whatever their errand or destination, it would be incumbent on them to wait on the governor and pay him their respects, it seemed imperative to make away with them, lest the massacre should be discovered. The traitor, therefore, hurried out at the head of his band to meet them. They proved to be eighty pilgrims from Shechem, Shiloh,[1] and Samaria, on the way to the ruins of the Temple at Jerusalem, which were still sacred to them; God-fearing descendants of the Ten Tribes, living among the heathen settled in their land by Esarhaddon.[2] They wished to shew their unshaken faith and devotion, by presenting unbloody offerings, such as did not need a priest, on the loved spot where the altar of Jehovah had stood.[3]

The destruction of the nation and of the sanctuary had overwhelmed them with grief; their beards were shaven, their clothes rent, their flesh cut, in heathen fashion,[4] and they were weeping aloud as they went.[5] Approach-

[1] Salem. Septuagint and Graf.

[2] 2 Kings xvii. 24.

[3] 2 Chron. xxx. 11; xxxiv. 9.

[4] The modern Dervishes sometimes, under religious excitement, cut their cheeks and brows, arms and breasts, stripping themselves to the waist to do so. Jeremiah speaks of the practice more than once. Thus in chap. xvi. 6, we read of men "cutting themselves," and in chap. xlviii. 37, "on all hands are gashes." In every case this wounding one's self is intended as a sign of grief, either in contrition or for some great affliction.

[5] Septuagint.

ing with hollow sympathy, Ishmael invited them to pay the wonted visit to the governor, and thus drew them into his power. Once inside the courtyard[1] of the residence, the gates were closed behind them, and seventy out of the eighty were forthwith massacred; ten, only, ransoming their lives by the promise of a heavy payment in wheat, barley, oil, and honey, which, they told him, they had stored in pits unknown except to themselves. The seventy corpses were then thrown into Asa's well in the courtyard, which offered a ready-made grave, as the bodies of our countrymen and countrywomen were to be tumbled into the well of Cawnpore twenty-four centuries later.[2]

Blind hatred or jealousy of Gedaliah had urged on the author of this hideous tragedy, which made any mercy from the Chaldæans impossible for him and his associates. He and they had wreaked a furious and mad vengeance on Gedaliah and all connected with him, as the penalty, at the hand of Jewish irreconcilables, for having had any peaceful relations with Babylon. It only remained to secure a safe retreat to Baaltes, across the Jordan. But the town could not be allowed to escape a visitation. Descending to it, therefore, Ishmael and his men seized all the inhabitants they could—including the daughters of Zedekiah, who had been sent by Nebuchadnezzar to Mizpeh, as a place of safety—and carried them off, with the other prisoners, to Ammon. Reports of the murder of Gedaliah and his household had, however, at last spread abroad, or it may be that only the news of the carrying off so many

[1] Not city. The word for courtyard, and that for city, are very much alike in Hebrew.

[2] Jehu appears to have acted in the same way with the forty-two relatives of Ahaziah. 2 Kings x. 14.

citizens from Mizpeh had become known. More or less of the terrible story very soon reached Johanan, and the chiefs associated with him, who had vainly tried to put Gedaliah on his guard. Starting at once with their bands in pursuit, they overtook the prisoners and their captors about two miles north of Mizpeh, at the great tank or pool of Gibeon, the remains of which—about 126 feet long and 100 broad—are still to be seen, for such a company could move only slowly. The sight of the pursuers was life to their victims. Aiding the attack of Johanan by rushing off from their guards, they were soon in safety, and Ishmael had to flee, leaving two of the ten leaders of his band slain on the field, and doubtless many of his men.

It was useless to return to Mizpeh, which in all probability had been burnt. Those rescued comprised men, women, children, and some of the eunuchs of Zedekiah's harem, and could not be left unprotected. Johanan and his companions did not live at Mizpeh,[1] and its very name was now, for the time, a horror. Besides, the Chaldæan troops still in Palestine and Syria would inevitably sweep down at once in wild fury on the scene of such an audacious and terrible crime, and might confound the innocent with the guilty in their revenge. It was therefore determined, as a first step, to retire southwards, with the view of fleeing to Egypt, if necessary. A large khan, built by Chimham, the follower or son of Barzillai, the friend of David, stood near Bethlehem, and was the starting point for travellers to Egypt. Accommodation could be found in it, and leisure gained for consulting as to the next steps to be taken. Thither, therefore, they hurried. Among the fugitives were the prophet Jeremiah

[1] Jer. xl. 13.

and his faithful attendant, Baruch. In such an emergency it was natural to turn for counsel to one so venerable. If, said they, he would favour them by asking directions from God for their guidance, they would faithfully act on them. Their request met with immediate compliance, but it was ten days before he felt able to give them any answer. When at last it came, moreover, it was not such as they



GUEST HOUSE.

From a sketch made by Major Conder, R.E. See also vol. v. p. 189.

had hoped to receive, and they had not faith enough in the prophet to act boldly on it. Safety, he told them, lay in their remaining in Judæa; disaster would follow their flight to Egypt. It had been a mistake even to think of it; nor had they been sincere in their request that he should inquire for counsel from God, as their resolution had been already formed. It was useless for him to warn them to remain in the country. Overcome by terror, and

already determined on a particular course, they were immovable. Jeremiah, they said, had been prompted by Baruch to speak as he had done, that the Chaldæans might seize them and carry them off as slaves to Babylon. Orders were therefore given to make for Egypt, and thither they accordingly went, carrying Jeremiah with them. Sixteen miles from Pelusium, the frontier Egyptian town, lay Tahpanhes, or Daphne,[1] where there was a garrison, under Psammetichus I., for defence against the Arabs and Syrians. There they settled for the time.

Jeremiah still, however, adhered to his gloomy forebodings, after his arrival in this new home. Taking "great stones," he buried them in sight of his countrymen beneath the mortar with which a pavement of bricks, from a kiln near at hand, was being laid down before the local palace of the Pharaoh, following the act by announcing:

"XLIII. 10. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts,[2] the God of Israel, Behold I shall send and fetch Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant, and set up his throne over these stones that I have buried, and he will spread out his carpet of state over them. 11. And when he comes he will smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; those for captivity to captivity; those for the sword to the sword. 12. And I will kindle fire in the houses of the Egyptian gods, and he shall burn (the temples) and carry off (the gods) captive, and he shall wrap the land of Egypt round him as a shepherd wraps round him his mantle,[3] and he shall march away in peace (no one molesting him). 13. And he will break the obelisks[4] of Bethshemesh,

[1] The present Tel Defenneh. Ebers, in Riehm, p. 1605.

[2] **Jer. xliii. 10-13.**

[3] The shepherd wears over his shirt of unbleached calico, in wet or cold weather, a thick, warm, sleeveless, sack-like outer garment of camel's hair, invariable as to material, shape, and colour—brown, with perpendicular stripes. Nebuchadnezzar will array himself with the land of Egypt—that is, seize its spoils—as easily as a shepherd puts on this loose, simple garment.

This illustrates vividly the dress of John the Baptist and of the prophets: it was that of a poor peasant.

[4] Matzaiboth = sacred pillars.

(the house of the sun,[1]) in the land of Egypt, and he will burn the houses of the gods of the Egyptians with fire."

The fulfilment of this prediction, as we shall see, followed in due time.

The flight of Gedaliah's community to Egypt extinguished the last semblance of a Jewish state. The work of the ten centuries since Joshua crossed the Jordan had been undone. Every Hebrew looked back with boundless pride to the empire of David; but the sceptre had now fallen from the hands of his descendants, after they had held it for five hundred years, and his people had no longer a country. The Ten Tribes had been in exile for more than a century, though Assyria, which carried them off, had been overthrown. A great many of the people of Judah and Benjamin had fallen in battle, or siege, or by the other miseries of war; part had been led off in chains to Chaldæa, and, now, a large number made Egypt their home. Henceforth, there seemed little human hope that they would ever again take root in the land given by God to their fathers. The murder of Gedaliah had broken the continuity of their national life, and violently closed their history for the time. Slowly realized, the greatness of this disaster impressed itself deeply on the people at large. A public fast was appointed on the anniversary of Gedaliah's death, and has ever since been observed. The consciousness that all the nations around rejoiced at their ruin, deepened the bitterness of humiliation. Even then, as in all ages since, the Jew had made himself universally hated. Ammon, Moab, Edom, Damascus, the Philistines, the very Arabs of the desert, both settled and nomadic, and the haughty Phœnicians of the north, clapped their hands at

[1] Heliopolis or On. See vol. ii. 23.

the downfall of Jerusalem. It needed all the consolation of knowing, from the prophets, that these nations would suffer in their turn, to make the situation endurable. Egypt, however, received the exiles kindly. Jewish colonies had already settled in it,[1] and were being constantly strengthened by immigrants from many parts, for, already, members of the "dispersion" were found in all countries, east and west. Palestine itself contributed many, besides those who fled with Johanan and his companions. Troubles soon followed Gedaliah's death; leaders rising who sought to shake off the Chaldæan yoke; for the bulk of the humbler classes of the nation still remained in the land, the better classes and the artisans, mainly, having suffered deportation. Six years after the fall of Jerusalem, local insurrections led to Nebuchadnezzar sweeping off seven hundred and forty-five more captives to Babylon—doubtless all picked men—and many others, we may be sure, had to flee to their brethren in Egypt.[2] By these successive reductions of the population, parts of Judah were, at last, left almost a desert. "The holy cities were a wilderness: Jerusalem a desolation."[3] The land could now enjoy her sabbaths.[4] To make matters worse, in the south, the Edomites seized a part of the country, extending their borders to the sea-coast, with or without permission from the Chaldæans.

The disturbances in Judah after the murder of Gedaliah may have been connected with the presence of the Chaldæans in Phœnicia, Nebuchadnezzar having begun the siege of Tyre in B.C. 586;[5] two years after the fall of Jerusalem. This great military enterprise had been the

[1] Jer. xxiv. 8. [2] Jer. lii. 30. [3] Isa. lxiv. 10.
[4] Lev. xxvi. 34, 43. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. [5] 586-573, Riehm.

subject of a series of discourses by Ezekiel, delivered to the exiles on the Chebar, shortly before it was undertaken, when the triumph of the arms of Babylon over the Jews had left its armies free to turn to the long-threatened capital of Phœnicia. The word of Jehovah, the prophet tells us, came to him, saying:

"XXVI. 2. Son of man,[1] because Tyre says respecting Jerusalem, 'Ha! the gate of the nations is broken in pieces;[2] the stream of



Modern Tyre.

people and of trade is turned to me; I will be filled, (now that) she is laid waste.' 3. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I come against thee, O Tyre,[3] and will cause many people to flood up against thee, as the sea brings up its waters, (wave upon wave). 4. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers. I will also scrape away her (very) dust and make her a naked rock. 5. She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah, and she will be a spoil to the nations. 6. And (towns and villages), her "daughters," (subject

[1] **Ezek. xxvi. 1-6.**

[2] Men from all parts entered the gates of Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. Or it may mean, the trade that passed through them from many parts.

[3] Insular Tyre is meant. Not the old city on the mainland. The channel between the two was 1,200 paces broad, and not very deep.

to her) on the mainland, shall be slain by the sword, and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

"7. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah:[1] Behold, I will bring against Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the North; the king of kings, with horses and chariots and horsemen, and a great host and much people. 8. He will slay thy daughters on the mainland by the sword, and he will raise besieging towers against thee, and cast up a mount against thee,[2] 9. and raise a tortoise[3] against thee. And the blow of his battering ram will he direct against thy walls, and break down thy towers with his crowbars. 10. The dust raised by his horse will cover thee, by reason of their number; thy walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen, the wheels, and the chariots, when he enters thy gates as men enter a breached city. 11. He will stamp with his horses' hoofs in all thy streets; he will slay thy people with the sword, and cast down thy grand Baal-pillars to the ground. 12. And they will plunder thy wealth, and carry off thy merchandise, and break down thy walls, and destroy thy lordly mansions, and cast thy stones and thy timber, and (the) rubbish (of thy houses), into the midst of the sea.[4] 13. Thus will I hush the voice of thy songs, and the murmur of thy harps will be heard no more. 14. And I will make thy site a bare rock; thou wilt be a place for the spreading of nets, and wilt never be rebuilt; for I, Jehovah, have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah!"



ASSYRIAN EMBROIDERED ROBES.

The news of the destruction of Tyre will shock all the princes of maritime lands, far and near, and all the Tyrian colonies on the mainland of Africa and Europe, and in the islands of the Mediterranean.

[1] **Ezek. xxvi. 7-14.** [2] Vol. iv. pp. 354, ff.

[3] A structure covered with hides, or made of linked shields, under protection of which the besiegers sought to undermine or dig through the wall. Riehm, p. 436. Or, it may mean a cover of shields linked together, beneath which the besiegers approached the walls. Hävernick. Ewald. Hitzig. Keil.

[4] Nebuchadnezzar tried to make a mole to the island city across the arm of the sea between it and the mainland. He was not, however, successful in this, but Alexander the Great, who afterwards carried out the same idea, found the water shallow

"XXVI. 15. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to Tyre:[1] Verily, at the report of thy fall the coast lands will tremble—when the dying groan (in thee), when slaughter is in thy midst! 16. And all the princes of the sea will come down from their thrones, and lay aside their robes, and put off their embroidered garments, and clothe themselves with fear, and will sit (in lamentation) on the earth, and will tremble unceasingly, and be appalled at thy destruction. 17. And they will raise a song of lament for thee, and say to thee, 'How hast thou perished, who wast frequented by all the sea people, the renowned city which was mighty in the sea, thou and thy citizens, who caused the fear of her to rest on all the sea nations. 18. How shall all coasts tremble in the day of thy fall; the islands of the sea be dismayed at thy passing away!"

Tyre, swallowed up by the waves of the sea, will sink into the kingdoms of the dead, and vanish for ever from the earth.

"19. For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, When I make thee a desolation, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I bring the deep over thee, and many waters cover thee, 20. I shall hurl thee down to them who have descended to the pit, to the people of old time, and make thee dwell in the under world, in the eternal desolations, with the dead who have gone down to Sheol, that thou mayest be no more inhabited; and I will create a (new) Dominion in thy place, in the land of the living.[2] 21. I will give thee up to utter destruction, and thou shalt cease to be; though men seek for thee thou shalt never be found more, says the Lord Jehovah."

A second oracle paints the glory of the great city under the figure of a ship of its own magnificent merchant navy, which floated on every sea, as that of Britain does in our own age.

All the earth had contributed towards the construction and outfit of the splendid vessel. Its rowers and crew were supremely skilful and brave, but to the dismay of all

where the Chaldæan king had thrown the wreck of the city into the waves. Arrian, *Anab.*, ii. 18.

[1] **Ezek. xxvi. 15-21.** [2] To what power could the prophet refer?

men, when it sailed forth, it was wrecked by a tempest from the east. This striking figure is varied by the introduction of a description of Tyre itself, its trade and wealth; but as much of the chapter[1] has already been quoted elsewhere,[2] only the prophetic picture of the shipwreck need be given here.

"XXVII. 25. Tarshish-ships[3] were thy caravans;[4] they carried thy merchandise (O Tyre), and thus thou wast made exceeding rich and glorious in the midst of the sea. 26. (But) thy rowers have brought thee out on the high sea,[5] and the east wind has broken thee up in the midst of the ocean. 27. Thy riches, thy merchandise, thy goods (for exchange), thy sailors, thy steersmen, thy ship-carpenters, the traders who sell and buy thy cargoes,[6] and all the fighting men in thee, even all the multitude on board, will sink in the waters, in the day of thy shipwreck. 28. The coasts tremble at the wild cries of thy steersmen, 29. and all that ply the oar, all sailors, all steersmen of sea-going ships, (thinking no one safe, since thou hast perished), leave their ships and get to the firm ground, 30. and wail aloud for thee, (in their terror and sorrow), and weep bitterly, and throw dust on their heads, and strew themselves with ashes, 31. and shave themselves bald for thee, and gird themselves with sackcloth, and weep over thee in sadness of heart, with bitter wailing, 32. and in their sorrow[7] raise a song of lament for thee—'O what city was like Tyre, like her that is made silent in the midst of the waters!' 33. When thy wares were borne from sea to sea, thou didst supply the wants of many peoples; thou enrichedst the kings of the earth with the greatness of thy wealth and of thy wares; 34. but now thou art reduced to ruins, and buried in the midst of the waves; thy goods and all thy people in thee, have sunk into the depths of the waters! 35. All the inhabitants of distant coasts will be thunderstruck (at thy calamity), their kings will tremble exceedingly, their countenances will fall. 36. The traders of other lands (thy rivals) will mock[8] at thee, because thou wast their dread,[9] but, now, hast vanished forever."

[1] Ezek. xxvii. 1-24.
[2] Vol. iii. pp. 386, 387.
[3] Great merchantmen, like our old "Indiamen," or more modern "clippers."
[4] **Ezek. xxvii. 25-36.**
[5] Ps. lxxvii. 19.
[6] = our supercargo, who manages all the commercial affairs of a trading voyage.
[7] "Thy sons" = colonies, Eichhorn. The words are very nearly alike.
[8] Literally, "hiss."
[9] Ps. lxxiii. 19.

In another discourse anticipating the victory of Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel, as the siege advanced, dwells again on the approaching catastrophe, the very idea of which was as terrible in the ancient world as that of London being razed to the ground would be in our day. Ithobaal II.[1] was now reigning in Tyre, and is addressed by the prophet as personifying his subjects. The pride and haughtiness of his dynasty made him a fit mark for stern denunciation; for, like many lines of ancient kings, it claimed descent from the gods, if, indeed, each monarch did not arrogate personal divinity.[2] But ruler and people will perish together. The word of Jehovah, says Ezekiel, came again to me, as follows:

"XXVIII. 2. Son of man,[3] say to the king of Tyre—thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because thy heart is lifted up (with pride), and thou hast said, 'I am a god, and I sit throned as one, in the midst of the seas,' though thou art a man, and not God, and because thou thinkest thy wisdom divine, 3. and boastest that thou art wiser than Daniel,[4] so that no secret can hide itself from thee: 4. and that thou hast gained thy power by thine own wisdom and understanding, and (by them) gathered gold and silver unto thy treasuries; 5. that it is by thy supreme skill in trading, moreover, that thy might has grown so great, and because thine heart is lifted up at thy riches:

"6. Therefore thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because thou thinkest thy understanding like that of a god, 7. I will bring the barbarians[5] upon thee, the fiercest of the nations, and they will draw their swords against thy sun-like wisdom, and profane thy divine lustre, 8. and hurl thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die like the common men, slain in the midst of the waters. 9. Wilt thou say, 'I am a god,' before him who slays thee, though thou art a man and no god to him who takes thy life? 10. Thou shalt die the death of the uncircumcised, by the hand of barbarians,[6] for I have spoken, says the Lord Jehovah."

[1] Jos., *C. Ap.*, i. 21. [2] Ezek. xxviii. 2. [3] **Ezek. xxviii. 2-10.**

[4] The new critics evade this allusion to Daniel by saying it refers to some unknown worthy of a former age! [5] Literally, "stranger, foreigner."

[6] The Phœnicians were apparently circumcised (Movers in *Ersch und Gruber*, vol. iii. pp. 24, 431; Herod., ii. 104), and in this lies the sting of the prophet's words. They

Ere long the prophet sees him lying slain, and raises the death lament over him. The strophes are keenly sarcastic in their tone, recounting the lofty pretensions of the king, and describing him as a radiant cherub, covered with gold and precious stones, and set on the mount of God in Eden, but falling into sin, and driven from Paradise to find a miserable end.

"XXVIII. 12. Son of man[1]—said the voice in his breast—raise a death song on the king of Tyre and say to him: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, O thou seal and keystone of the Tyrian States, (closing up its perfect arch); full of wisdom and perfect in beauty! 13. Thou didst dwell in Eden, the garden of God, and wast decked with all kinds of precious stones, the sardine, topaz, diamond, chrysolite, onyx, jasper, sapphire, carbuncle, beryl, and with the gorgeous golden robes made by thy artificers, for the day of thy coronation![2] 14. I set thee as a broad-winged cherub on the holy mount of God; thou walkedst within the stones of fire, (which enclosed the sacred spot with a flaming wall).[3] 15. In thine early days[4] (when still, as a cherub, unfallen and pure), thou wast blameless, (but thy pride has led thee to sin, and thou art no longer thus innocent), since thy corruption has shewn itself in

imply that he would have no lament raised for him, and that his corpse would be left unwashed, undressed with grave clothes, and perhaps unburied – the deepest indignity to any one, far more to a king, in ancient times.

[1] **Ezek. xxviii. 12-15.**

[2] This passage is very dark. Keil translates it "the service of thy tabrets and of thy wives was with thee; on the day when thou wast created (king) were they ready." The drums or tabrets are held to be an allusion to the state and glory of his accession; the wives, to his inheriting the harem of his predecessor. I have followed the rendering of Eichhorn mainly. The Septuagint reads, "With gold thou hast filled thy treasures and store-houses."

[3] "I set thee beside the cherub on the holy mount of God, thou wast in the midst of the flaming stones." Septuagint.

This seems to be a poetical introduction of the Eastern mythical conception of "the mount of the assembly (of the gods)," Isa. xiv. 13, the Olympos of the Greeks and of the Accadians, by whom it was called "The Mountain of the East." Its peak was the pivot on which the sky rested, and hence it was known, also, as "The Mount of the World." It lay far away to the north-east, and was the supposed entrance to the lower world. This fabled sacred mountain was the Meru of the Hindoos, the Albordsch of the Persians, and the Asgard of the ancient Germans. Instead of the flaming sword of Genesis, it is guarded by the fire-flashes of flaming stones encircling it with a wall.

[4] Literally, "creation."

thee.[1] 16. Through the greatness of thy commerce thy soul [2] was filled with evil, and thus thou sinnedst. Therefore I will cast thee out of the mount of God, and will destroy thee,[3] O guardian cherub, from within the walls of flaming stones. 17. Thy heart lifted itself up (proudly), because of thy prosperity.[4] Thou hast spoiled thy wisdom through thy glory corrupting thee; I will hurl thee to the dust, I will make thee a sight before kings. 18. Through the multitude of thy sins, in thine unrighteous trading, thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries;[5] therefore I will cause fire to burst out of thy midst, and it will devour thee, and reduce thee to ashes on the earth, before all who see thee. 19. All that know thee among the nations shall be horrified at thee: thou shalt be a terror (to them) and shalt cease for ever."

Sidon, which was closely related to Tyre, could not expect to escape the storm of war which had burst on the great city. An oracle, therefore, announces its fate also.

"XXVIII. 21. Son of man—said the Divine Voice—set thy face against Sidon and prophesy against it, 22. saying, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am (coming) against thee, O Sidon: and will glorify Myself on thee, that men may know that I am Jehovah, when I execute judgments on her, and have shewn My holiness in her. 23. I will send pestilence into her and blood into her streets, and the slain shall fall in her by the sword, which shall press in on her from every side, and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

The prophet closes the long roll of denunciations of the heathen nations round Israel, by an assurance of God's favour to His ancient people, to cheer them in their humiliation and exile.

[1] The whole passage is an imaginative parallel of the Prince of Tyre with Adam. Eden, the cherubs, the creation in innocence, and the Fall, all indeed that is recorded in the opening of Genesis, were thus familiar in the days of Ezekiel, a fact to ponder in connection with the new criticism.

[2] Treasuries: Septuagint. Literally, "inner parts." **Ezek. xxviii. 16 23.**

[3] The covering cherub has driven thee, etc. Septuagint.

[4] Literally, "beauty."

[5] The Tyrian State is conceived as the Paradise on the Mount of God, to which the prince was the protecting cherub. Its sanctuaries he had defiled by the sins of his great mercantile city.

"24. There shall thus be no more a thorn to prick thee,[1] or a spear to pierce thee, of all (the nations) round thee, that despised thee, but they shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah."

A promise to the exiles, that God would bring them back again to their own land, after the destruction of the enemies who now trampled over them, concludes this oracle.

"25. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When I gather the house of Israel from out of all the nations among whom they are now scattered, and shall have shewn Myself holy in them, in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob. 26. There they will dwell in safety, and build houses, and plant vineyards, and live in peace, when I have executed judgments on all that despise them round about; and they shall know that I am Jehovah their God."

Tyre was founded about 2,750 years before Christ, according to the statements of its priests to Herodotus. It is spoken of in the Book of Joshua as "the strong city."[2] It seems first to have suffered from the spread of the Assyrian empire, in B.C. 869; payment of tribute by it to King Assur-nazir-pal being then recorded. In 840 we find it buying off Shalmaneser II. by payment of large sums, and again in 742, a century later, ransoming itself in the same way from the armies of Tiglath-Pileser II. or Pul. A little later it revolted from that monarch, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, weighing about three tons, and worth perhaps twenty times as much as at present. Its first siege, so far as we know, was that of Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon. The city on the mainland was destroyed, but that on the island of Tyre held out for five years. This siege ended about 720, and was followed by great prosperity for a hundred and fifty years.[3]

[1] Ezek. xxviii. 24-26. [2] Josh. xix. 29. [3] See Ezek. xxvii.

The siege of Tyre, by Nebuchadnezzar, had begun very soon after the fall of Jerusalem. Unfortunately, our information respecting it, though it lasted thirteen years, from B.C. 586 to B.C. 573, is very scanty. It is thrice mentioned by Josephus,[1] but he does not speak of the result. The silence of the Tyrian historians on this point, is, however, a striking proof that it must have ended ingloriously for their city. If the defence had been successful, it would assuredly have been loudly proclaimed. But though Nebuchadnezzar took the city, it appears, from a passage in Ezekiel,[2] that he did not give it up to pillage, and thus gravely disappointed his soldiers, who had counted on sacking it, as a compensation for the toils and danger[3] of the prolonged siege. Possibly a treaty may have been made, securing its being spared the horrors of storming and plunder, in consideration of such humiliating conditions of heavy tribute as were familiar to the Phœnicians in similar conjunctures. Egypt, indeed, is said by Ezekiel[4] to be given to the Chaldæan monarch as a reward for having done against Tyre what Providence had designed. But if Jerome be right, it is not necessary to suppose any compromise. "Nebuchadnezzar," he tells us,[5] "when he besieged Tyre, and could

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 1. *C. Ap.*, i. 19, 21. [2] Ezek. xxix. 17–20.

[3] Movers, p. 448. It is satisfactory to note that Winer, *Realw.*, vol. ii. p. 638, and Hitzig, *Jes.*, p. 273, *Ezech.*, p. 227, speak of Nebuchadnezzar as having taken insular Tyre. Some take for granted, from Ezek. xxix. 18, that the siege had failed; but if it had, the Chaldæan king could not have marched on to the conquest of Egypt. It must have been successful, though the city was spared the horrors of a sack. No cuneiform record of the campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar against Judah and Tyre has yet been discovered; but a curious inscription, carved by his orders on the rocks of the Dog River, about eight miles north of Beirût, came to light about two years ago. Unfortunately, it is much worn, and the best preserved passage speaks only of the famous wines of Lebanon and Helbon, though a "squeeze" of it, which I saw in the house of its discoverer, the Danish consul at Beirût, shews it to have been very large.

[4] Ezek. xxix. 20. [5] Hier. in *Ezek. ad loc.*

not bring up his rams, towers, and tortoises, because it was surrounded by the sea, ordered the vast multitude of his army to carry stones and materials for a mole, and having filled up the narrow interval of sea (between it and the mainland), made a continuous path to the island. The Tyrians seeing this now completed, and perceiving that the foundations of the walls were being shaken by the blows of the battering rams, carried off in ships, to various islands, whatever was valuable in the shape of gold, silver, or goods, so that when the city fell, Nebuchadnezzar should find no reward for his labours." There is evidence, moreover, that Tyre was henceforth ruled by princes strictly tributary to Babylon, some of them being even sent from the Chaldæan capital,[1] and by the Persian kings after the Chaldæan dynasty had fallen.

But though Tyre was thus taken, as Ezekiel had predicted, his prophecy that it would be razed to the ground till its site became a bare rock, on which men would spread their nets, proved to refer to a later period. Nor is it wonderful that this should be so, since the time of the fulfilment of their prophecies is expressly said to have been withheld from the seers divinely inspired to utter them. In B.C. 332, the island city was attacked by Alexander, and for the time crushed. Using the ruins of old Tyre on the mainland to build a mole by which his soldiers could reach the island, he took the still virgin fortress in seven months, and sold 30,000 of the inhabitants as slaves. Still it was not destroyed. Regaining its commercial glory after a while, it continued even in the days of St. Jerome, in the fourth century after Christ,[2] to be "one of the

[1] Fragment of Menander, quoted by Josephus, *C. Ap.*, i. 21.
[2] Jerome, on Ezek. xxvii.

noblest, and most beautiful of cities." Its conversion to Christianity, in the general sense always implied in speaking of great communities, was then already an accomplished fact. St. Paul, indeed, had found a Christian church in it.[1] In the beginning of the fourth century Methodius was its bishop, and in 315 a great church was built in it by Eusebius of Cæsarea. In 335, a famous Synod was held within its walls. Under the Crusaders it had an archbishop, and was still spoken of as a "most noble city."[2] In 1291, however, it was retaken by the Saracens, and from that time it has sunk into utter decay. Even its ruins have been in great part removed. Last century, when Hasselquist visited it, he found it had only ten inhabitants. The ruins now seen on the peninsula of Tyre are those of the buildings of Crusaders or Saracens. Tyre of the Phœnicians, if any of it still remains, lies below the wreck of the city of the Crusaders, and of that of Mohammedan and Christian Tyre. The Tyre of the present day, a place of from 3,000 to 4,000 inhabitants, stands on the dam built by Alexander the Great, which has increased to a broad isthmus, by the sand thrown up by the sea. The houses are mostly mud huts, and the streets, crooked and filthy passages. Outside the town gate, the rubbish of the old city covers the ground for nearly two miles, and the harbour is so sanded up and filled with the wreck of the ancient city, that only small boats can enter. Part of Tyre is under the sea; the rest of it beneath the ground. For many feet deep, the soil is a mass of building stones, shafts of pillars and fragments of marble, etc. Thus it has become "a heap of ruins"—a bare rock in the sea on which to spread nets. Its shadowy resurrection is

[1] Acts xxi. 3, 4.

[2] Joh. Wirziburgensis, *c.* A.D. 1125.

due to the fancy of a fanatical sect of Mohammedans, called Metawileh, who came to the then deserted spot, towards the end of last century, and began to raise huts for themselves, with the ruins lying round. Ancient Tyre stood on reefs and islands, forming, together, an area of about two hundred acres, with two harbours, each of about twelve acres, or half as large as the harbour of Sidon.

CHAPTER X.

THE JEWISH COLONIES IN EGYPT

While Nebuchadnezzar was detained year after year in Phœnicia, the immigration of Jews to Egypt steadily increased, till colonies were formed not only at Tahpanhes, but at Migdol, twelve miles from Pelusium; at Noph or Memphis in the Delta, and in the land of Pathros, which was the name for Upper Egypt generally, and especially for a quarter of Thebes and the country round it.[1] Exile from their country had not improved them. Instead of seeking Jehovah, they went back to the idolatries of their fathers, refusing to listen to Jeremiah, though recognized as a true prophet. Taking advantage, therefore, of a great gathering of his people, at an idolatrous festival in Upper Egypt, the aged seer once more warned them of the ruinous consequences of such a course.

"XLIV. 2. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts,[2] the God of Israel (cried he): ye have seen all the evil that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the towns of Judah; behold, they are desolate to-day, without an inhabitant, 3. because of their wickedness which they did, to provoke Me to anger by going (to idols), to burn incense (before them), and serving other gods which neither they, ye, nor your fathers knew. 4. I sent you all My servants, the prophets; sent them eagerly and constantly; and caused them to say to you: 'Oh, do not this abomination, which I hate.' 5. But they would not listen or incline their ear, to turn from their wickedness, and not burn incense to other gods. 6. Wherefore My indignation and My fierce wrath poured itself forth, and

[1] Pathros, in Riehm. See Jer. xliv. 1-15.

[2] **Jer. xliv. 2-6.**

flamed throughout the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, and they were turned into desolation and loneliness, as they now are. 7. And now,[1] says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Why do ye commit so great wrong against yourselves, (in the face of such warnings), (by acting in a way that must end) in cutting off man and woman, child and suckling, from Judah, leaving you no survivors (to preserve your name)? 8. Why do ye stir Me to wrath by your conduct in burning incense to strange gods, in the land of Egypt, to which ye have come for a time—to draw down on yourselves destruction, and cause yourselves to be made a curse[2] and a contempt to all the nations of the earth?

"9. Have ye (already) forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and of the kings of Judah and their wives,[3] and your own wickedness and that of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10. Yet they are not penitent[4] (for all this), even now, and have neither feared My law and My statutes, that I set before you and your fathers, nor walked in them. 11. Therefore says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I set My face against you for evil, to cut off all Judah. 12. And will sweep away the remnant of it, who have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt, to live there for a time. They will be destroyed and fall in Egypt; they will perish, small and great, by the sword and by famine, and will become a curse, an astonishment, an execration, and a scorn. 13. For I will punish them that dwell in Egypt as I punished Jerusalem, by sword, famine, and pestilence. 14. None of the remnant of Judah who have gone into Egypt, to dwell there awhile, shall escape or survive, to go back to the land of Judah, whither their souls yearn to return; only some fugitives will do so."

But Jeremiah's appeals and threats were equally vain. Among the great multitude he addressed, no voice was lifted in favour of a return to Jehovah. In the idolatrous festival they had gathered to observe, the women took a leading part, contrary to the custom, which forbade their

[1] **Jer. xliv. 7–14.**

[2] Men would imprecate a similar fate to theirs, on those towards whom they wished evil.

[3] Hebrew, "*his* wives" = the wives of each. The Septuagint has "his princes," which is adopted by Ewald and Eichhorn.

[4] Literally, "bruised."

sex mingling in public with men; and so far from confessing guilt, they were ready to defend their conduct.[1]

"XLIV. 16. 'With respect[2] to what you have told us in the name of Jehovah,' said their representative, 'we shall not listen to you, 17. but shall assuredly do what we please, burning incense to the queen of heaven,[3] and pouring out drink-offerings[4] to her, as we have done (in the past), we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food and were prosperous, and saw no trouble. 18. But since (Josiah's days, when) we left off burning incense to the queen of heaven, and pouring out drink-offerings to her, we have been in want of everything, and have been destroyed by sword and famine. 19. Moreover, when we, (women), burn incense to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink-offerings to her, we do so with the full knowledge of our husbands,[5] both as to our making cakes in her image,[6] and pouring out offerings to her."

To this Jeremiah promptly replied, that though the national misfortunes were thus ascribed to the prohibition by Josiah, of moon-worship and other idolatries, they were rather the result of the re-introduction of these superstitions, with their inevitably attendant moral corruption.

"21. (How ?[7]) Has Jehovah then forgotten your often-repeated offering of incense, burned in the towns of Judah, by you, and your

[1] The words (Jer. xliv. 15), "All the people that dwell in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah," illustrates the similar expression in the Pentateuch, that all the people assembled before Moses and were addressed by him. The meaning in both cases is, that a great number, who in a manner represented the whole, were present. [2] **Jer. xliv. 16-19.**

[3] The moon, or the planet Venus. Jer. vii. 17–18; see vol. v. pp. 33–36. The goddess Astarte was the personification of the moon (Baudisson, in Herzog, 2te Aufg., vol. x. p. 216); or perhaps Venus, as the star that leads the moon to her husband, the sun (Baudisson in Herzog, 2te Aufg., vol. i. p. 721). In either case, the moon was "the queen of heaven." But it is a question whether Astarte, whom the Jewesses so devoutly worshipped, was the moon or Venus. The supposition that she represented the latter, has led Venus to be supposed "the queen of heaven," by some.

[4] Drink-offerings of wine. [5] **Num. xxx. 6, 7.**

[6] A Phœnician sacrificial tariff, found lately in Cyprus, mentions as one item of the temple accounts, "For two bakers who baked the cakes for the (holy) queen (of heaven)." [7] **Jer. xliv. 21.**

fathers, your kings, and your princes? (Have they not rather sunk into His heart), 22. so that Jehovah could no longer bear you,[1] because of the evil of your doings and the abominations ye committed, and is it not on their account that your land is now desolate and a curse, and without an inhabitant? 23. (Yes! it is just) because you have burned incense and sinned against Jehovah, and have not obeyed the voice of Jehovah, nor walked in His law, statutes, and testimonies, that the evil ye now endure has come upon you."



ISTAR ASTARTE, or Ashtoreth. For another figure of the goddess, see vol. v. p. 34.

But their past and present sufferings were not all they would suffer for their apostasy from Jehovah. Still worse was to follow.

"24. Hear the word of Jehovah, all Judah, (both men and women), who are in the land of Egypt. 25. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel: Ye and your wives, (before Me), have carried out with your hands (now bearing sacred cakes for the moon goddess) the words of your lips, when ye said, 'We shall assuredly pay the vows we have made, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and pour out drink-offerings to her.' Perform your vows by all means: fail not to do so! 26. But hear the word of Jehovah to all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt: Behold, I have sworn by My great name, says Jehovah: Verily it shall no more be uttered by any man of Judah in all Egypt, saying, 'As the Lord Jehovah lives:' 27. for, behold, I will watch over them to do them evil, not good, so that all the men of Judah that are in Egypt shall perish by the sword and famine, till they are all gone. 28. For they that escape the sword, and return out of Egypt to Judah, will be very few, and all the remnant of Judah

[1] **Jer. xliv. 22-28.**

that have come to Egypt, to sojourn in it for a time, shall know whose word shall stand, Mine or theirs. 29. And that ye may know that My word spoken against you,[1] to your hurt, shall be carried out, let this serve as a sign to you, says Jehovah: 30. Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, into the hand of his enemies[2] and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah, king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, his mortal foe."

The ruin of the Egyptian king under whom the fugitive Jews had taken refuge, became from this time a frequent subject with the two prophet-exiles, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in the valley of the Nile and on the banks of the Chebar.

Tyre had been besieged by Nebuchadnezzar only as a step towards the conquest of Egypt, now the great ally of the Phœnicians against Babylon, as, in former times, against Assyria. Till the great trading city was humbled, it would have been perilous to invade the valley of the Nile; but the determination of the Great King to follow up the submission of Tyre by marching against Pharaoh, was not concealed. The question of supremacy in Western Asia must be finally settled. As to the issue, it could hardly be doubtful, for the legions of Egypt could not hope to resist the terrible hosts of Chaldæa, under a king who was the greatest general of the age. It would not excite surprise, therefore, when Jeremiah, always the opponent of the Pharaoh, and loyal to Babylon, made the announcement, as the siege of Tyre drew near its end, that the Chaldæan would come and smite the land of the Nile.[3]

While the inevitable overthrow of the kingdom of the Pharaohs, by Nebuchadnezzar, was thus proclaimed in Jerusalem and in Egypt itself, Ezekiel sounded its

[1] **Jer. xliv. 29-30.**

[2] He was murdered by Amasis, as will be seen hereafter.

[3] **Jer. xlvi. 13**

doom from the banks of the Chebar. Already, before the fall of the Holy City, he had foreseen and repeatedly announced the conquest of the Nile valley as the certain issue of that monarch's campaigns in Syria.[1] Tyre on the mainland had yielded to the Chaldæan arms almost at the same time as the capital of Judah,[2] and the island city of Tyre, which afterwards made so long a defence, alone resisted his arms in Syria. The Great King had awaited at Riblah the fall of Jerusalem, before beginning this final effort, little dreaming it would task his resources as it did.[3] Yet the issue could not be doubted by the kingdoms which had fallen, one after the other, before the great conqueror. The thirteen years of the siege were partly utilized to chastise the refractory peoples of Palestine—Ammon, Moab, Edom, the Philistines, and Damascus, with the Arabs round[4]—thus fulfilling the predictions of the prophets against these nations; but their subjugation, and that of insular Tyre, were only steps towards the ultimate conquest of Egypt, the ancient rival for the dominion of Western Asia.

The siege had hardly commenced before Ezekiel destroyed the last hopes of the Egyptian faction in Babylonia, by renewing his warning, that Pharaoh, so far from being able to help Judah, was doomed.

"XXXII. 2. Son of man[5] (said the Divine Voice to him, about the beginning of B.C. 584).[6] raise a lamentation[7] for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and say to him: Thou wast like a young lion among the nations;

[1] Ezek. xxix. 1-16; xxx. 20-26; xxxi. 1-18.

[2] Rüetschi in Herzog, 2te Auf., art. "Nebucadnezar." Jer. xxvii. 51, 59. Ezek. xxxii. 30.

[3] Fall of Jerusalem, B.C. 586; siege of Tyre, B.C. 585-572. Rüetschi.

[4] Ezek. xxv. Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix. 7.

[5] **Ezek. xxxii. 2.**

[6] Twelfth month of the twelfth year of the Captivity. Smend says, March, B.C. 584.

[7] As over the dead.

thou wast like a great crocodile in the waters (of thy land); thou dashedst through thy streams,[1] and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and tossedst up[2] their floods.[3] 3. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will spread out My net over thee, by the help of many nations, and they shall draw thee out (of thy waters) in My net.[4] 4. And I will cast thee down on the land; I will sling thee out on the face of the open ground, and make all the birds of heaven light and stay on thee, (to devour thee), and I will fill the wild beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will strew thy flesh on the mountains, (round) and fill the valleys with thy foul carcass. 6. I will also soak the land in which thou swimmest, even to the mountains, (with the gushing out of thy blood); the torrent-beds[5] will be filled with it. 7. And when I quench thy light, I will darken the heaven and its stars; I will veil the sun with clouds, and the moon will not give her light. 8. All the shining lights in heaven will I make black over thee, and pour darkness over thy land, says the Lord Jehovah.

"9. I will trouble the heart of many peoples, when I publish thy destruction among the nations, in lands which thou hast not known. 10. I will paralyze many peoples with fear through thy fate; their kings will shake with terror at it, when I brandish My sword before their eyes; and they will tremble continually, each for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. For thus says the Lord Jehovah: The sword of the king of Babylon will smite thee. 12. By the swords of mighty men—the fiercest of the nations, all of them—will I overthrow thy multitude; and they will lay waste all that lifts itself up proudly in Egypt, and all its multitude will be destroyed. 13. And I will destroy all its cattle from beside its many waters,[6] so that no foot of man nor hoof of beast shall trouble these waters more. 14. After that I will make them settled and grow clear,[7] and their canals flow like oil, says the Lord Jehovah. 15. Then, when I have made the land of Egypt a

[1] By a very slight emendation, Ewald renders this clause, "thou tossedst up (spray) through thy nostrils." See Job xli. 20. But does the crocodile cast spray out of its nostrils? Yet, in a poetical way, the figure may refer to the water dashed up before him in his onward rush.

[2] Literally, "didst tread."

[3] Same word as "streams."

[4] The two words for "net" are different, but their distinctive features are not known. The last word comes from a root "to enclose." **Ezek. xxxii. 3-15.**

[5] The Aphikim, literally, "swift rushes of water." In Egypt they could only refer to the canals.

[6] Canals, etc.

[7] The Nile fertilizes Egypt by its black mud, whence the Nile valley is called "The black." Ezekiel poetically sees it become a clear flowing stream.

desolation, and it is stripped of its abundance, when I have smitten all that dwell in it, they will know that I am Jehovah.

"16. This is the lamentation that they will raise;[1] the daughters of the nations shall chant it; they will sing this dirge for Egypt, and for all her multitude, says the Lord Jehovah."

A fortnight later[2] Ezekiel returned to a subject so engrossing. He sees the teeming population of the Nile valley overwhelmed by Nebuchadnezzar. The conquest of any power or kingdom in those days was its virtual extinction; like its sons slain in battle, the State itself might be said to have gone down to the grave. Egypt, therefore, crushed by the Chaldæan, is seen in Sheol; a companion, now, of the shades of mighty empires that had passed away before her. Their presence is her only miserable consolation.

"XXXII. 17. The word of Jehovah (says the prophet) came to me thus: 18. Son of man! lift up a wailing for the multitude of Egypt, and cast her down like the daughters[3] of (other) famous nations (before her), into the underworld, to them that have already descended to Sheol! 19. Art thou any fairer than others? Get thee down, and lie (dishonoured) among the uncircumcised.[4] 20. The Egyptians shall fall among those slain by the sword! It is already given (to him who shall use it)! Draw down Egypt and all her multitudes (to the shades of the pit, ye powers of the underworld)! 21. The mighty heroes (already in Sheol) say, from its depths, of Pharaoh and his allies, (now with themselves): 'They have come down hither, there they lie, the uncircumcised, slain with the sword.'"[5]

The great kingdoms of the past, visited for their sins, like Pharaoh himself, are already in the underworld, and

[1] **Ezek. xxxii. 16-21.**

[2] On the 15th, doubtless of the twelfth month, though the copyist has omitted to give the number.

[3] Population.

[4] "Uncircumcised" was the lowest word of contempt in the mouth of a Jew.

[5] And hence without honourable burial. "Uncircumcised" is used as equivalent to "vile," "degraded," "unclean," because not purified by funeral rites.

greet him when he enters it, to lie down in the grave among them, with all his host.

"22. Asshur is there (in Sheol),[1] with all its host; its king, surrounded by the graves of his people, all of them slain, pierced by the sword. 23. Their graves are made in the depths of Sheol, those of his host round that of the Great King; all slain, pierced by the sword that caused terror in the land of the living.

"24. Elam is there and her whole multitude, round the grave of its king; all slain, pierced by the sword, gone down, uncircumcised, to the underworld; they who spread terror in the land of the living, now bear the shame (of death) with those already lying in the grave. 25, They set Elam a bier in the midst of the graves of her hosts, all of them round about her, all of them uncircumcised, slain in battle; for though they spread terror in the land of the living, they now lie humbled among those already in the grave. Elam is laid in the midst of the slain!

"26. Meshech and Tubal, with all their multitude, are there; their graves round about that of their chief; all of them uncircumcised, slain in battle—they who spread terror in the land of the living! 27. They lie not with the heroes of the uncircumcised, gone down to Sheol with their weapons of war, their swords laid under their heads,[2] but their iniquities have come on their very bones, because they were a terror to the mighty, in the land of the living.

"28. Thou, also (O Egypt), shalt lie shattered among the uncircumcised, with them that are slain by the sword!

"29. Edom lies there, her kings, and all her princes, mighty as they were, laid among them, slain by the sword, with the uncircumcised and those gone down to the pit!

"30. There lie the princes of the North—all of them, and all the Sidonians, gone down to the shades of the slain; (terror-inspiring once,) brought to shame now! They lie, uncircumcised, among those slain with the sword, bearing a common shame with the rest of the dead!

"31. All these will Pharaoh see (when he goes down, like them, to Sheol), and take comfort to himself (at the sight of them), for the slaughter of all his host, (now gathered around him, there once more,

[1] **Ezek. xxxii. 22-31.**

[2] Burial of the weapons of war with the dead was common in antiquity, as it is now in some uncivilized countries. Virgil, *Æn.*, 6, 233. *Arrian*, i. 5. Diod. Sic. xviii. 26.

as pale ghosts), for Pharaoh and all his army will be slain in battle, says the Lord Jehovah. 32. I put the terror (of him)[1] into the hearts of men in the land of the living, but, (for all that) he will be stretched out among the uncircumcised, with them that are slain by the sword; Pharaoh and all his host, says the Lord Jehovah."

Thus sang the prophet in the year B.C. 584, nineteen months after the fall of Jerusalem. The years that followed saw the Chaldæan forces straining every nerve to conquer insular Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar triumphed after his thirteen years' siege; but, as we have seen, the city, though taken, was spared. The cup of its iniquity was not yet full, and its utter overthrow was delayed to a later age. But the fate of Egypt was sealed by the submission of the great Phœnician city.[2] Now tributary to the Great King, and no longer a source of danger in his rear, he was free to march to the Nile. Thither, therefore, his victorious legions advanced, in the fighting season of the year B.C. 572 or 571, immediately after the siege of Tyre was ended. Fourteen or fifteen years had passed since Ezekiel's former predictions, that Pharaoh would be defeated, but though his dirge and that of his host had been sung on the Chebar so long before, the prophet's faith in the ultimate result had never been shaken. When Tyre at last fell, he returned to the subject. On the first day of the seven and twentieth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, and of his own, the year B.C. 571, the word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him, saying:

"XXIX. 18. Son of man,[3] Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, has made his army go through hard service against Tyre; every head is bald, and every shoulder rubbed bare, (with pushing the war machines and such like toil), and neither he nor his host has had any return from the city, for their toil in besieging it. 19. Therefore, thus says

[1] **Ezek. xxxii. 32.** [2] See p. 180. [3] **Ezek. xxix. 18, 19.**

the Lord Jehovah : Behold, I give over the land of Egypt to him (as a recompense), and he will carry off its wealth and seize its spoils and plunder its booty, and this will be the reward of his army. 20. I have given him the land of Egypt for his service against Tyre,[1] because his host were working for Me, says the Lord Jehovah. 21. In that day I will make a horn shoot forth to the house of Israel, and I will open thy mouth in their midst,[2] and they will know that I am Jehovah."

Egypt had filled a great place in the foreign relations of the whole reign of Nebuchadnezzar. Just before his accession, while crown prince, he had fought the great battle of Carchemish, which expelled Pharaoh Necho from Western Asia. In 587, he had been disturbed during the siege of Jerusalem, by the attempt of Pharaoh Hophra to relieve that city ; and during the siege of Tyre, Egypt had apparently aided the Phœnicians. A burning thirst for revenge was thus kept alive in the bosom of the Great King, and this fact was doubtless known widely. Alike on the Nile and on the Chebar, the threats of the Babylonian conqueror must have been constantly discussed in the colonies of Hebrew exiles, so long zealous partisans or opponents of Egypt. It was natural, therefore, that the prophet-preachers of the day should often recur to the subject. Hence, perhaps the latest utterance of Ezekiel which we possess, reverts to it once more. In the thirtieth chapter of his Book, he tells us that the word of the Lord came again to him, apparently soon after the prediction last quoted, foretelling the excitement that would be felt, even in Ethiopia, on the news of the downfall of Egypt and its allies.

"XXX. 2. Son of man (said the Divine Voice), prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah : Wail aloud ! 'Alas for this evil day !'

[1] **Ezek. xxix. 20, 21; xxx. 2.**

[2] A time will follow, in which the prophet, justified by the fulfilment of his prediction, will be able to speak more freely than in the hostile past.

3. For the day is near,[1] the day of Jehovah, a day of dark clouds! the time (of the judgment) of the heathen! 4. The sword will come on Egypt, and trembling on Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt, and (the enemy) carries off its wealth, and its very foundations are destroyed. 5. (The contingent of) Ethiopians, the men of Phut, the men of Lud,[2] and all the mixed tribes of desert allies, the Libyans[3] (fighting in their ranks), and all the vassal peoples[4] shall fall by the sword."

All the allies of Egypt will be destroyed, and the country laid desolate.

"6. Thus says Jehovah: All the supports of Egypt will fall,[5] and its proud might will sink. From Migdol (on the borders of Palestine), to Syene[6] (far south, on the cataracts of the Nile), they shall fall by the sword, says the Lord Jehovah. 7. Egypt will be desolate in the midst of desolate lands, and her cities waste in the midst of waste cities. 8. And they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I kindle a conflagration in Egypt, and all her allies[7] are destroyed. 9. On that day, messengers sent off by Me, will start in swift Nile boats, to alarm the Ethiopians dwelling in fancied security, and terror will seize them when the day of Egypt arrives, for, lo, it comes!"

Nebuchadnezzar has been chosen by God to carry out the Divine purposes, and the ruin he will inflict will be terrible.

"10. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will make an end of the hum of men in Egypt, by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. 11. He and

[1] **Ezek. xxx. 3-11.**

[2] Phut was the Egyptian Punt, on the Somali coast. There were two Luds; one Lydia in Asia Minor; the other, some African district, near Egypt, now unknown. It is this Lud to which Ezekiel refers.

[3] Ewald has "Nubians." [4] Literally, "sons of the covenant."

[5] The idols, princes, strong cities, and warriors. See verses 13, 15, 17.

[6] Syene is the Assouan of to-day. It was famous in antiquity for its granite quarries, in the wild red hills behind it. I visited them, and saw an obelisk of huge length and corresponding bulk, lying ready for being removed from the hillside from which it had been cut out, who knows how many ages ago? Vast numbers of tombs, many very ancient, are found in the rocks all round Assouan, which is now a poor town with a wretched bazaar. It was strange to see red-coated English soldiers stationed at this frontier town of ancient Egypt.

[7] Literally, "helpers."

his people with him—the fiercest of the nations—will be brought to destroy this land ; they will draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will dry up the Nile canals, and give the land into the hand of a rapacious soldiery,[1] and lay it and all that is in it waste, by the hand of barbarians ; I, Jehovah, have spoken !"

A fuller rehearsal of the sorrows that will befall the doomed land follows.

"13. Thus says the Lord Jehovah : I will destroy the blocks (of wood they call gods), and root out the worthless idols from Memphis,[2] and



Syene (Assouan) during the Overflow of the Nile.

there will be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, and I will spread fear throughout its borders. 14. And I will make Pathros (that is, Upper Egypt) desolate, and will kindle a conflagration in Zoan-Tanis (in Lower Egypt), and will execute My judgments in No-(Amon—or Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt). 15. And I will pour My fury on (Pelusium or) Sin, (the frontier fortress of the land, on its north-east border), and, thus, its strength and I will cut off the multitude of Thebes. 16. And I will kindle a conflagration in Egypt ; Pelusium will tremble greatly, and Thebes be captured, and Memphis stormed in the daytime. 17. The young men of On[3] (or Bethaven, the head-quarters of idolatry) and of Bubastis,[4] will fall by the sword, and the

[1] This is the meaning of "selling" it to "the wicked." **Ezek. xxx. 12-17.**

[2] The special seat of the worship of Ptah and Apis.

[3] Heliopolis, Bethaven, "House of Nothingness." Aven and On, in Hebrew, have the same consonants ; a change of vowels only making the difference.

[4] Pi Beseth, specially given to the worship of cats. Consignments of the mummies of these creatures have latterly been imported to Liverpool, to grind into manure. One of these, lately, consisted of nearly twenty tons of cats, numbering about 180,000

population of both cities will be led off into captivity. 18. At Tahpanhes (that is, Daphne, near Pelusium),[1] the day will be darkened, when I break the supports of Egypt there, and make an end of her haughty pride ; a cloud will cover her, and (the towns), her daughters, will be led off into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt, and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

The fulfilment of these successive prophecies was strikingly complete. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been compelled to turn his arms for a time in some other direction, after the fall of insular Tyre, before marching against Egypt. According to Greek writers, Pharaoh Hophra used this interval to fit out a great fleet, built on the then famous Greek model, and manned by Ionians and Carians, and sent them to Phœnician waters, to stir up, if possible, a rising against the Chaldæans, so as to keep them from the Nile valley. Weak on the land, Hophra seemed more likely to be successful by sea, as the Chaldæans were indebted, in naval matters, chiefly to allies. His only measure of defence in his own territories was to fortify and strongly garrison the frontier town Pelusium,[2] trusting to its detaining the Great King by the slowness of a siege, while the Egyptian navy was busy in his rear. But the Phœnician cities, demoralized by recent defeat, were not disposed to embroil themselves again with Nebuchadnezzar. He had razed continental Tyre to the ground, and might do the same with other towns, if they rose against him. Their fleets, therefore, instead of joining that of Egypt, sailed over to the neighbouring Cyprus, and united with the navies of the petty kings of that island. Following the enemy thither, however, Hophra's ships won a great victory

—taken from a cemetery of the creature in which millions, it would seem, lie wrapped each in cloth, and carefully embalmed. The price paid per ton for them, in Alexandria, was £3 13*s.* 9*d.*, about $17.50.

[1] **Ezek. xxx. 18, 19.** [2] Ezek. xxx. 15.

over the combined fleets, and then sailing back to the Phœnician coast, took the city of Sidon by storm, and gave it up to plunder. On this, the other coast towns hastened to submit to Hophra, and recognized him as their overlord ; a dignity he retained for three years. In striking corroboration of this, remains of Egyptian structures, bearing the Pharaoh's name as their builder, are still found at the coast towns of Gebal, the ancient Byblos, and Arvad, the ancient Arados.

Elated by such prosperity, Hophra fancied himself "the happiest king that ever lived," and insanely vaunted that even "the gods could not overthrow him." But the dissipation of his dreams was terrible ! Hearing of his successes, the Libyan shore tribes, harassed by Greek colonists on their soil, appealed to him as their natural protector, and in his vanity he undertook their deliverance. As he could not, however, trust his Greek mercenaries against their own countrymen, he sent native soldiers on the expedition, which proved an utter failure. The Egyptians were so disastrously defeated, that very few of them returned to Egypt. Mourning filled the land, and indignation against Hophra became loud and threatening. The priests and native soldiery, who, alike, hated him for his partiality to Greek mercenaries, whispered that "he had sent the Egyptian army to Libya to get rid of it." The sight of the straggling and wretched survivors at last roused a wide and fierce revolt, which he sought to quell by ordering his chief general Ahmes against the rebels. The troops, however, no sooner saw him, than they elected him king, and forced him to march against the Pharaoh. Opposing him at the head of thirty thousand mercenaries, Hophra might reasonably have expected victory ; but the

enthusiasm of the foe was irresistible, and the royal army was routed, the king himself being taken prisoner, and shut up in his palace at Sais, by the conqueror. This, however, would not satisfy the populace. Clamouring to have the unfortunate monarch given up to them, they at last gained their point, and at once strangled him.

The account given by Josephus is different. According to his authorities, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt, and having dethroned Hophra, set up Ahmes, better known as Amasis, in his place, and this is substantially corroborated by various Egyptian and Babylonian inscriptions. The governor of a province of Southern Egypt, in those years, living at Elephantina almost as a petty king, had erected, among other memorials of himself, a statue, recently discovered,[1] on which is the following inscription :[2]

"His Majesty (Hophra) invested me with a very high dignity, that of his eldest son, making me governor of the regions of the south, to drive back invaders." The magnificent gifts this fortunate personage had made to the gods and the priests of his province, and the temples he had built, are then recounted, and he proceeds : "I set up my statue that my name might endure for ever, by its means, for I protected the temple of the gods when it suffered from the foreign soldiery of the Amu,[3] the people of the north and those of Asia—the wretches who had evil in their hearts, for they purposed to overrun and ravage Upper Egypt. They carried out the plans their hearts had conceived."[4] He adds, that he kept the invaders from getting beyond the first cataract, at Syene, or Assouan, and drove them back on Hophra's army, by which, he affirms,

[1] Now in the Louvre. [2] I have somewhat condensed the language.
[3] Any yellow-skinned or Semitic people.
[4] Vigouroux, vol. iv. p. 374. *Records of the Past*, vol. vi. p. 81.

they were defeated, though this was doubtless a diplomatic flattery to Egyptian feeling. The facts seem to be, that the native soldiery actually revolted, and that Nebuchadnezzar was thus enabled to overthrow Hophra more easily. Yet his army, as we see from this inscription, marched as far south as the first cataract, thus literally fulfilling the prediction of Ezekiel,[1] that he would waste the land in its whole length from Migdol to Syene. But the Great King, not wishing to make Egypt a mere Babylonian province, sanctioned the succession of Ahmes to the throne as his vassal under the name of Amasis, the murderer of Hophra, whose miserable end had been foretold by Jeremiah.[2]

The new Pharaoh was not satisfied, however, with his position, and speedily strove to make himself independent. Taking advantage of the fine navy left by Hophra, he sailed against Cyprus, and conquered it; an act resented by Nebuchadnezzar as rebellion and a declaration of war. The Babylonian army was once more, therefore, directed against Egypt, and invaded it in B.C. 568, the thirty-seventh year of the Great King—three years after the former campaign on the Nile. The contest that followed was bitter in the extreme, most of the Delta being laid waste, with all its cities. At last, however, Amasis was conquered, and, though left on the throne, was again forced to become a tributary of Babylon. A clay tablet in the British Museum fortunately preserves a notice of this second Egyptian campaign; a fact specially interesting, since it is the only inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, referring to his wars, which has come down to us. It runs thus: "In the thirty-seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the country of Babylon, he went to Egypt (Misr), to make war,

[1] Ezek. xxx. 6. [2] Jer. xliv. 30.

Amasis, king of Egypt, collected (his army) and his soldiers marched and spread abroad." Then follow fragmentary lines, describing, apparently, his forces of horse, chariots, and infantry, but the tablet is, unfortunately, so imperfect that the issue of the campaign is lost.[1] Mutilated as it is, however, the notice is of extreme interest, since it shews the minute accuracy of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which have been treated as unhistorical, it being assumed that Nebuchadnezzar never invaded Egypt.

But the spade of the scientific excavator has recently disclosed a still more striking corroboration of the historical details given by Jeremiah. Working upon a large mound, or group of mounds, called Tell Defenneh, long known to be the "Pelusiac Daphnæ" of the Greeks, and the "Tahpanhes" of the Bible, in the dreariest corner of the north-east Delta of the Nile, Flinders Petrie came upon the ruins of a great building, which has been identified, beyond doubt, as the palace mentioned by the prophet, to whose neighbourhood, Johanan, followed by all "the captains of the forces," and "the remnant of Judah," brought the fugitive daughters of Zedekiah, then a dethroned and mutilated captive in Babylon. The flight of the princesses took place about B.C. 585, during the reign of Ua-ab-Ra, of the 26th Egyptian dynasty, whom the Hebrews called Hophra, and the Greeks Apries. The Pharaoh received them with hospitality. To the mass of Jewish immigrants he granted tracts of land extending from Tahpanhes to Bubastis, while to the daughters of Zedekiah, his former ally, he assigned his royal residence, which the Bible calls "Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes."

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. pp. 210-225. Vigouroux, vol. iv, p. 376.

Here, no doubt, the fugitives gladly rested, and would have been happy, in the thought that they were safe, had Jeremiah, who was among them, not disturbed this pleasant dream, by telling them that Nebuchadnezzar would, assuredly, come and destroy the whole place. And this, as we have seen, he did. According to Josephus, "He fell upon Egypt and took the Jews that were captive there, and carried them off to Babylon, and such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews." It was long believed, however, that this statement was an error, and that Nebuchadnezzar had never been in Egypt at all, but an inscription, as we have seen, now shews that he did actually invade it, while another states that he penetrated to the south, till he reached the far-distant Assouan. But now, finally, Mr. Petrie not only discovered the very palace assigned to the daughters of Zedekiah, but found that, in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah, it had been plundered, dismantled, and burnt.

Arriving at his destination in the desert towards evening, footsore and weary, he saw a huge mound of blackened brickwork standing high against a lurid sky, and reddened by a fiery sunset. His Arabs hastened to tell him its local name; and he may be envied the delightful surprise with which he learned that it is known far and near as "El Kasr el Bint el Yahudî—the Castle of the Jew's Daughter." Losing no time in beginning his explorations, he found the ruin had been a stronghold, quadrangular, lofty, and massive—very like the keep of Rochester Castle. Round it were the remains of a city so extensive, as to shew that Tahpanhes must have been a large place. The palace consisted of sixteen square chambers on each floor, both the outer walls, and the inside partitions, being of enormous

strength, but it was impossible to tell how many stories there had been, originally. Under the four corners of the chief part of the structure, were plates of metal and stone, put in when the foundations were laid, each bearing the cartouche of Psammetichus I., the founder of the dynasty, about seventy years before the arrival of the Hebrew fugitives. Under the south-east corner, moreover, were found the teeth and bones of an ox, sacrificed at the foundation ceremony, while libation vessels, grain pestles, specimens of ores, model bricks, the bones of a small bird, and a series of little tablets in gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, jasper, cornelian, and porcelain, engraved with the royal name and titles, were also found among the foundation deposits. Some of the basement chambers were found uninjured, below the mounds of rubbish, and among these a kitchen, a butler's pantry, and a scullery. The kitchen is a large room, with recesses in the thickness of the walls, which served for dressers. Here some fourteen large jars and two large flat dishes were standing in their places, unharmed amid the general destruction. A pair of stone grain pestles, a large iron knife, various weights, and three small flat iron pokers—or possibly spits—were also found in this room. The butler's pantry, it need scarcely be said, was the room to which wine jars were brought from the cellars to be opened. It contained no amphoræ, but hundreds of jar lids and plaster amphoræ stoppers, some stamped with the royal ovals of Psammetichus, and some with those of Necho, his successor. Here also was found a pot of resin. The empty amphoræ, with quantities of other pottery, mostly broken, were piled in a kind of rubbish depot close by.

In other chambers there have been found large quanti-

ties of early Greek vases ranging from B.C. 550 to B.C. 600, some finely painted with scenes of battles of the giants, chimeras, harpies, sphinxes, processions of damsels, dancers, chariot races, and the like, nearly all broken, but many quite mendable ; also several big amphoræ with large loop handles, quite perfect. A sword-handle with a wide, curved guard ; some scale-armour, bronze rings, amulets, beads, seals, small brass vessels, and other minor objects of interest have also turned up, and two rings engraved with the titles of a priest of Amon. Among these relics, some small tablets inscribed with the name of Amasis (Ahmes II.) and a large bronze seal of Apries (Hophra) are important, inasmuch as they complete the name-links in the historic chain of the twenty-sixth dynasty. Apries brings us to B.C. 591–570, and to the time of the flight of the daughters of Zedekiah.

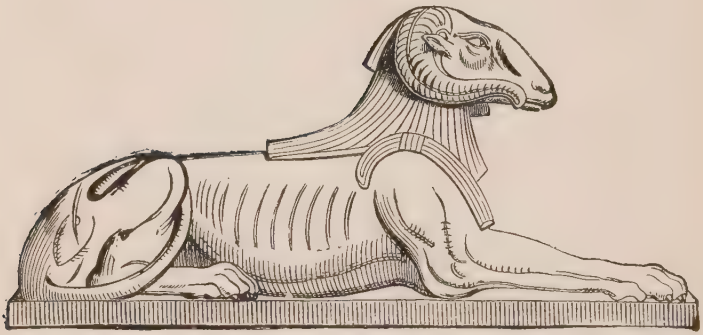
But the most interesting part of the discoveries was that of the very brickwork, or pavement, mentioned by Jeremiah.[1] "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in mortar, in the brickwork which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house, in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah ; and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid ; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them, etc." "As soon as the plan of the palace began to be recovered," says Mr. Petrie, "the exactness of this description was manifest. On the north-west side was a great open-air platform of brickwork, such as is now seen outside all great houses,

[1] Jer. xliii. 8.

and most small ones, in Egypt. A space is reserved outside the door, generally along the side of the house, covered with hard-beaten mud, edged with a border of bricks not much raised above the ground, and constantly kept clean. On this platform the inhabitants sit, when they wish to converse with their neighbours, or the passers by. A great man will settle himself to receive his friends, and drink coffee, and public business is generally transacted there. Such seems to have been the object of this large platform, which offers an area of continuous brickwork, resting on sand, about a hundred feet by sixty, facing the entrance to the later buildings, at the east corner. It was evidently a place to meet persons who would not be admitted to the palace or fort, to assemble guards, to hold large levées, to receive tribute and stores, to unlade goods, and to transact the multifarious business which, in such a climate, is best done in the open air. The actual way into the palace was along a raised causeway, at the back of this platform.

"This brickwork or pavement is, no doubt, that of which Jeremiah speaks, as stretching out at the entry of Pharaoh's house at Tahpanhes. Here, the ceremony described by the prophet, took place, before the chiefs of the fugitives, assembled on this spot, and here, Nebuchadnezzar spread 'his royal pavilion.' Unhappily, the great denudation by winter rains, through many centuries, has swept away most of the platform, so that we cannot expect to find the stones hidden by Jeremiah, but the still remaining memorials of the scene bear impressive witness to the minute exactness of his narrative. Strange to say, in corroboration of the actual presence of Nebuchadnezzar at Tahpanhes, three cylinders of terra-cotta, the text of

which was an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar's, about his buildings in Babylon, were sold, some years ago, to the Boulak Museum, by a native, who seems to have found them at this place, where they were probably put under the now ruined part of the platform, to commemorate the visit of the Great King."



THE GOD AMON, "THE HIDDEN OR INVISIBLE ONE;"
called also Nu or Num, after whom Thebes is called "No Amon" by the prophet.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE CHEBAR.

THE prophet Jeremiah vanishes from the sacred record after his last vain appeal to his countrymen, at their great idol feast, to abandon idolatry. When that address was delivered, or where, is not related; though the fact that the Jews had spread over both Lower and Upper Egypt,[1] implies that the festival must have taken place years after the prophet's unwilling settlement on the Nile, about B.C. 587. At that time he seems to have been already over sixty years of age,[2] so that at the second campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in Egypt, in B.C. 568,[3] if he lived to see it, he would be nearly eighty. Whether he survived till then is not known, though his last words of remonstrance to the people he had so long faithfully taught, may date at least from B.C. 573, the year before the first Chaldæan invasion of the Nile valley. If, however, the closing verses of the 52d chapter[4] were written by the prophet himself, he lived till the reign of Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, which began B.C. 562 or B.C. 561.[5] In this case he must have been more than ninety at his death. But it is extremely doubtful whether these verses have not been added

[1] Jer. xliv. 1.

[2] Supposing him to have been about twenty on his call to the prophetic office in B.C. 625.

[3] Rüetschi. The date is uncertain as to the exact year. It may have been a year or two earlier.

[4] Jer. lii. 31–34.

[5] B.C. 562–560, Birch. B.C. 560–559, Schrader. B.C. 561–560, Volck.

by a later hand. How or when he died is, in fact, quite uncertain. He may have been stoned to death by his countrymen at Tahpanhes, as Christian tradition affirms, or he may have gone to Babylon with the retiring army of Nebuchadnezzar, as the Rabbis allege. Josephus and the Scriptures are alike silent as to his later history or death; but the former tells us, that the remnant of the Jews who had fled to Egypt were carried off to Babylon by the Chaldæans.[1] It is quite possible that the silence as to his last days is a veil drawn over them by the Jews, to conceal the fact of his martyrdom; for we must not forget that our Lord accuses the nation of having habitually killed the prophets,[2] and we know from Jeremiah's own writings that his life was more than once threatened.

But if his death, like that of so many in all ages who have rebuked the sins of their generation, was that of a martyr, legend and tradition have united to shed an exceptional glory round his memory. The fulfilment of his prediction, that the exiles would return to Judæa after seventy years, raised him, in the national estimation, to the highest rank among the prophets. Though long dead, it seemed as if a spirit so tender must still watch over the interests of the people. To think of him as their guardian or patron saint naturally followed. It was believed that, before the destruction of Jerusalem, the lost tabernacle and ark, and the treasures of the Temple, had been hidden by him, in one of the caves of Nebo, till the day when the nation is restored to honour by the Messiah.[3] "The prophet," says the tradition, "being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ix.
[2] Matt. xxiii. 37. Luke xi. 47.
[3] 2 Macc. ii. 1–8.

he went forth to the mountain where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God. And when Jeremy came thither, he found a hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the door. And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. Which, when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying, As for this place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather His people again together, and receive them into mercy." The glory of Judas Maccabæus was heightened by a legend that the prophet appeared to him in a vision, as "a man with gray hairs and exceeding glorious, of a wonderful and excellent majesty," and gave him a golden sword sent down from God, to fight the battles of the Lord.[1] He was believed to continue in heaven the constant intercession for his race and for the holy city, which was believed to have marked him, as "a lover of the brethren," while on earth.[2] Apocryphal writings were issued in his name, to secure them popularity.[3] Nor would the nation believe that even his earthly relations to them were over; for so late as the days of our Lord, his return was confidently expected, to herald the advent of the Messiah.[4] To use the noble figure of Milton, the clouds that had accompanied and obscured his course in life, were transfigured to heavenly splendours after he had departed.

The glimpses of Jewish life on the banks of the Chebar, after the fall of Jerusalem, are not less interesting than those we obtain of the remnant which fled to Egypt.[5] In the month Tebet, corresponding roughly to our January,

[1] 2 Macc. xv. 13, 15.
[2] 2 Macc. xv. 14.
[3] See Bar. vi. Hieron., on Matt. xxvii. 9. Grotius, on Eph. v. 14.
[4] Matt. xvi. 14.
[5] Ezek. xxxiii. 21.

in the eleventh[1] year of the Captivity and of Zedekiah's reign, the news reached Ezekiel, in Babylonia, that the Temple had been carried by assault and burned, along with the city, on the 10th of the fifth moon[2]—the month Ab—nearly our August—five months before; so long had it taken for the news to reach the Euphrates. Like all true prophets and preachers in every age, he was intensely unpopular. His predictions of the fall of Jerusalem, the continuance of the Exile, and the ruin of the Jewish State, had been so bitterly resented, that for a number of years he had been refused a public hearing, and had been forced to remain silent, except to visitors in his own house. For many months back, however, he had felt that the approaching fulfilment of his gloomy forebodings, through the victory of Nebuchadnezzar in Palestine, would at last silence all opposition to him as a prophet speaking for God, and once more open the little world of the Exile to his words. None could any longer refuse to hear a seer whose utterances had been so wonderfully accomplished. His victory must come very soon, and his standing as a true spokesman for Jehovah be indisputably established.[3] At last, a fugitive from the storming of the Holy City reached the settlements on the Chebar, and brought to the prophet's house the first authentic news of the awful disaster. The spell of enforced silence was at once dissolved. The truth of his predictions was only too evident. His opponents dared no longer hinder him from the free exercise of his office.

A lingering hope was still cherished, however, among

[1] The Hebrew has "the twelfth year," but as this would imply that it took eighteen months for the news to reach Babylon, it seems certain that some copyist has introduced an error into the text.

[2] Compare Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 12.

[3] Ezek. xxxiii. 33.

those around him, that the survivors of the catastrophe in Palestine might, after all, be able to maintain themselves as a feeble community, and thus form a centre to which the exiles could ere long rally, through some political revolution in Babylon. But Ezekiel hastened to dissipate all such dreams. The destruction of Jerusalem, he told them, would be followed by the utter ruin of the State and the complete desolation of the land. The results of the murder of Gedaliah by Ishmael soon vindicated this prediction. A second deportation to Babylon followed, and it even seems probable that the troubles excited by Gedaliah's death continued to shew themselves in subsequent popular risings. Jeremiah speaks of a third deportation, five years after the fall of the capital.[1] Some of the bands of fighting men which had escaped the Chaldæans not improbably stood aloof from them permanently, keeping the country disturbed by harassing forays. But, like true Jews, even their robber life was dignified by a religious colouring. Few though they were, they fancied there was no reason to despair, since the land had been given to Abraham, when he was alone in the midst of the whole population; a much more hopeless position than theirs. Ezekiel, however, predicted a terrible end to these visionaries. Such a horde, wanting all true godliness, could neither preserve the land by their own efforts, nor expect to be maintained in it by Jehovah.

"XXXIII. 24. Son of man[2] (said the Divine Voice to the prophet, apparently soon after the news of the great catastrophe reached him)—those who still live amidst the ruins of the land of Israel say: 'Abraham was (only) one (man) and (yet) he inherited the land. But we are many, and the land is given us for an inheritance.'

[1] Jer. lii. 30. [2] Ezek. xxxiii. 24.

"25. Say to them, therefore,[1] Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood; and can *you* hope to possess the land? 26. Ye support yourselves by the sword and by violence,[2] (not by justice and righteousness); ye work deeds of darkness, ye defile each man his neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land? 27. Speak thus, therefore, to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: As truly as I live, those who live in the ruined towns will fall by the sword, and those who live in the open country will I give to the wild beasts for meat, and those who lurk in strongholds and caves will die of the pestilence! 28. For I will lay the land utterly desolate, and the pride in her strength will cease, and the mountains of Israel will be so desolate that no one will pass through them. 29. And when I have thus laid the country utterly desolate, for all the abominations they have committed, men will acknowledge that I am Jehovah!"

If the prospects of the wild bands still wandering over Judæa were thus dark, the apathy and ungodliness of the exiles on the Chebar gave little hope of religious earnestness being speedily awakened among them. Ezekiel could now speak freely. His brethren, awed by the fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Jerusalem, no longer interrupted or opposed him, but honoured him with a hypocritical respect, and affected to bow to his authority. They kept talking of him, says the sacred narrative,[3] in the shadow of their doors and houses, and invited each other to go to him and hear his addresses. Coming in crowds, they sat before him with the devout air of true servants of Jehovah, and professed themselves delighted with his words, while they still secretly clung to their old sins. But the prophet saw through their insincerity. His discourses, he told them, simply tickled their ears, like a love-song well rendered, with its pleasant accompaniment of the lute or guitar; they heard him, and then dismissed

[1] **Ezek. xxxiii. 25 29.**
[2] Literally, "stand upon the sword."
[3] **Ezek. xxxiii. 30-33.**

all thought of his words. But the judgments of God, he assured them, were not exhausted. Such obduracy would bring fresh visitations, and under the infliction of these they would at last be forced to own, not in form only, but sincerely, that they had been listening to a true prophet of Jehovah.

Now that Jerusalem had fallen, the prophet's addresses to the people were necessarily changed in tone. The reproaches of former days would have been out of place. To rouse the nation to spiritual life was wiser and better. Like all his order, Ezekiel believed that the kingdom of God, as represented by his race, could not perish. Better days would come. Henceforward, therefore, he sought to cheer and revive his brethren by keeping before them this great hope, even in the midst of their despair and ruin. But national restoration could be attained only by a deep sense of the guilt of the past, and sincere reformation. While, therefore, maintaining the certainty of a happy future, notwithstanding all the confusion of the present, he did not keep back the conditions on which alone it could be secured. But, these fulfilled, there were no bounds to its glory.

Hence, in the opening chapter of this new phase of his ministry,[1] Ezekiel, first of all, reminded his fellow-exiles, so long indifferent or opposed to him, of the true office of a prophet, on their thorough realization of which the hope of sincere reformation depended. The word of Jehovah came to him, he tells us, with the following message :

"XXXIII. 2. Son of man![2] say to the sons of thy people, When I bring war on a country, and the people choose a man from their midst, and set him on the watch-tower (to look out); 3. and he sees the enemy[3]

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. [2] **Ezek. xxxiii. 2-3.** [3] Literally, "sword."

coming, and blows his trumpet and warns the people; 4. if any one hear his war horn and neglect the warning,[1] so that the sword comes and cuts him off, his blood is on his own head. 5. He heard the horn, and took no heed, his blood is on himself. Had he taken warning he would have been saved.

"6. But if the watcher see the foe coming, and do not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, so that the sword comes and cuts off one of them, the victim dies by his own fault, (for he should have been on his guard), but I will demand his blood at the hand of the watcher!

"7. I have set thee, son of man, as watcher for the house of Israel, that when thou hearest aught from My mouth, thou mayest warn them of it in My name. 8. If I say to the wicked, 'Wicked one, thou must surely die,' and thou warnest him not[2] from his evil way, that wicked man will (certainly) die for his sin, but I will require his blood at thy hand. 9. If, however, thou hast warned the wicked man of his peril, and he does not turn, he shall die for his sin, but thou hast saved thy soul."

The true prophet is thus required to warn the sinner of the impending judgments of God, as the look-out man on the watch-tower is required to give timely and loud notice of the approach of the foe. Safety, therefore, demanded that the prophet have free speech. But that God should have given them a true seer in their midst, was a sure proof of His favour, which might well keep off despair. For Jehovah would fain save the wicked, and threatens wrath through His prophet only that every one may take heed and reform. There is still time for this as long as His final judgment has not fallen.

"10. Speak thus, therefore, O son of man, to the house of Israel: (Ye have said rightly,[3] The punishment of) our transgressions and sins presses us down, and we decay to nothing through them:[4] how then can we hope to live (again as a nation)? 11. Tell them, As (surely as)

[1] **Ezek. xxxiii. 4-11.** [2] Literally, "the wicked."
[3] The word translated thus means also "rightly," "truly."
[4] The figure is that of a decaying corpse.

I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; My delight is that he should turn from his way and live! Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

Self-righteousness, ever disposed to justify itself, had adopted among the exiles a comfortable theory, that they were punished for the sins of their forefathers rather than for their own. Ezekiel had often exposed this self-deception in the past,[1] but he again shews its hollowness.

"XXXIII. 12. Say,[2] therefore, thou son of man, to the sons of thy people: The righteousness of the righteous will not save him in the day of his transgression, and the wicked will not fall[3] through his wickedness, in the day when he turns from it. Nor will the righteous preserve his life by having been so, in the day that he sins. 13. Though I say to the righteous, 'He shall surely live,' yet if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteous deeds shall not be remembered, but he shall die for the sin that he has done. 14. And in the same way, though I say to the wicked, 'Thou shalt surely die,' yet if he turn from his sin and do what is just and right; 15. if he give back the pledge (unrighteously detained), restore what he has robbed, and walk in the statutes of life, doing no evil, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. All his sins that he has done will be no more remembered; he now does what is just and right; he shall surely live. 17. Yet the sons of thy people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is *their* way that is not just!

"18. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and does what is just and right, he shall live for it. 20. Yet ye say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, I will judge you, every one after his own ways."

Such was the address with which Ezekiel re-opened his long-suspended public ministry. Responsible to God, as a divinely ordained preacher of righteousness, it was his imperative duty to tell his people their sins; to shrink from

[1] Ezek. iii. 20; xviii. 24, 26, 27.
[2] Ezek. xxxiii. 12-20.
[3] Literally, "stumble."

doing so was to imperil his own soul. On their part, it was no less imperative that they should repent, and honour the law of God in their hearts and lives. Thus alone could they bring about the glorious days for which they longed. In his next discourse, he passed from the sins of the people to those of their rulers and wealthy or powerful citizens. Their "shepherds" had hitherto sought only their own advantage, not that of their flock: injustice and violence had prevailed instead of right and truth, and the people had been plundered and oppressed, till at last, in great part through the fault of their "shepherds," utter ruin had overtaken the commonwealth.

The word of Jehovah came to him, he tells us, as follows:

"XXXIV. 2. Son of man,[1] prophesy against the shepherds[2] of Israel, prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel that fed (only) themselves! Should shepherds not rather feed the flocks? 3. Ye ate the fat[3] and clothed yourselves with the wool; ye killed the fatted sheep; ye fed not the flock! 4. Ye did not strengthen the weak, or heal the sick, or bind up the injured, or lead back the strayed, or seek the lost, but ruled lawlessly and with cruelty; 5. so that the flock was scattered for want of (true) shepherds, and became meat to all the beasts of the field, and was dispersed everywhere. 6. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and over every high hill, and were scattered over the whole earth, and no one asked after them or sought for them."

But Jehovah will deliver His flock from such false shepherds. The state of things that had prevailed before the fall of the nation would not obtain after its future restoration.

"7. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: 8. As I live, says the Lord Jehovah, because My flock was made a prey, and My sheep became food to every beast of the field through being left shep-

[1] **Ezek. xxxiv. 2-8.** [2] Kings. [3] Milk, butter, etc. Smend.

herdless, and because My shepherds did not search for them, but fed themselves and not My flock: 9. therefore [1] hear the word of Jehovah, ye shepherds: 10. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold I am coming to the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand, and will order it that they no longer feed the flock, nor even *themselves*, and I will rescue My sheep from their jaws, so that they shall no more be food for them."

Jehovah Himself will henceforth take the matter into His own hands. While He inflicts judgment on the heathen, He will gather together His scattered flock, and lead them back to their own land, where they will have the richest pasture and the tenderest care.

"11. For thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I Myself, even I, will both inquire after My sheep and take care of them. 12. As a shepherd takes care of his scattered flock when he is in the midst of them, so will I care for My sheep, and deliver them from all places to which they have been scattered, in the day of clouds and darkness. 13. And I will lead them out from among the peoples, and gather them from the lands, and bring them to their own country, and feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. 14. I will feed them on good pasture, and their fold will be on the high mountains of Israel. They shall lie down there in a safe fold, and will have fat pasture on the hills of Israel. 15. I will feed My flock, and cause them to lie down, says the Lord Jehovah. 16. I will seek for the lost, and bring back what has been frightened away, and bind up what has been hurt, and make strong what is sick. But I will destroy the fat and lusty, and feed them with (the) punishment (which is their due)!"

As the kings acted towards the whole people, so did the stronger in the community to the weak. The flock had not only worthless shepherds; there were among them hateful rams and he-goats—rich and powerful men—which kept the weaker sheep from the pasture. These Jehovah will visit, dealing with all as is right, and He will finally unite the whole flock under one shepherd.

[1] **Ezek. xxxiv. 9-16.**

"17. As for you,[1] O My sheep, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold I will judge between one sheep and another; that is, between the rams and he-goats, (and the rest of the flock). 18. Is it not enough that you have eaten down the good pastures, (ye rams and he-goats); must ye also tread down with your feet what remains? Is it not enough that you have drunk up the settled and clear water; must you also foul what remains with your hoofs? 19. And that (through this) My flock eat what you have trodden down, and drink what you have fouled?

"20. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah to them: Behold I, even I, will judge between the fat and lean sheep. 21. Because ye have thrust with side and shoulder, and pushed aside all the weaklings with your horns, till you have scattered them, 22. therefore I will help My sheep, so that they may no longer be a prey, and I will judge between sheep and sheep. 23. And I will set up a single shepherd over them, who will (really) feed them, My servant David; he will feed them, and be their shepherd. 24. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My servant David will be a prince in their midst; I, Jehovah, have spoken it!"

Under this prince, Israel will dwell in peace and security.

"25. And I will make a covenant of peace with them, and destroy evil beasts out of the land, and My flock will dwell safely in the pasture-country, and sleep in the woods.[2] 26. And I will bless them and the circuit of My hill,[3] and send rain in its season; there will be showers of blessing.[4] 27. The tree of the field will yield its fruit, and the earth its increase, and they will live securely in their own land, and know that I am Jehovah, when I have broken the bows of their yoke, and delivered them from the hand of those who held them as slaves. 28. They will no longer be a prey to the heathen (nations), nor shall the beast of the field devour them, but they will dwell safely, none making them afraid. 29. And I will give their soil rich fertility,[5] and they will no more be destroyed by hunger in the land, or

[1] **Ezek. xxxiv. 17-29.** [2] Hebrew, *yaar*. [3] The land of Canaan.

[4] The word used is that employed for the copious showers of November and December. Herzog, vol. xi. p. 26.

[5] Literally, "I will make to rise up for them a plantation of name," that is, the soil which is planted will be famous for its yield, through the "showers of blessing," verse 26. The mountains of Israel had long lain desolate, chap. xxxiii. 28.

bear any longer the reproach of the heathen. 30. And they will know that I, Jehovah,[1] their God, am with them, and that they are My people, the house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah. 31. But be ye men, O My flock, the sheep of My pasture; I am your God, says the Lord Jehovah!"

Obedience to the teaching of the prophets, and sincere loyalty to Jehovah, would thus bring about spiritual and temporal regeneration. Still more; to secure the glory of the restored Israel, its enemies would be destroyed. Edom is selected as the representative of the heathen by whom Judah had been at last brought to ruin. Bitterly hostile to the Jews for ages, it gloried in the triumph of Nebuchadnezzar. Since that time, moreover, it had seized a large part of the territory of Judah, which it now held.[2] It would at last be shewn, however, that Jehovah was with His people! Their prosperity would be secured, not only by a blessing on the land itself, but also by the destruction of all their foes.

"XXXV. 1. The word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 2. Son of man, turn thy face towards Mount Seir, and prophesy against it. 3. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am coming to thee, O Mount Seir, and will stretch out My hand against thee, and make thee waste and desolate. 4. I will lay thy towns in ruins, and thou shalt be a desert, and shalt know that I am Jehovah. 5. Because thou hast cherished undying hatred (against Israel), and gavest up its sons to the sword in the time of their trouble, the time when iniquity triumphed:[3] 6. therefore, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will turn thee into blood, and blood will pursue thee! Thou hast not hated blood-(shedding), and (thirst for) blood will pursue thee! 7. I will make Mount Seir waste and desolate, and cut off from it every one who either enters or leaves it, 8. and I will fill its mountains with its slain. On thy hills,

[1] **Ezek. xxxiv. 30, 31; xxxv. 1-8.**

[2] Ezek. vii. 24. Jer. xlix. 1. Lam. iv. 21. Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. iv. p. 105.

[3] A. V., "In the time of (our) sorest punishment," Ewald; "Of the iniquity of the end," Cheyne and Clarke; "When iniquity brought the end," Eichhorn.

and in all thy ravines and torrent beds, the slain by the sword shall fall. 9. I will make thee perpetual deserts,[1] and thy towns will not be inhabited, that ye may know I am Jehovah. 10. Because thou hast said, 'Both peoples (Israel and Judah) and both (their) territories shall be mine, and we shall take them in possession,'—though Jehovah dwelt there—11. therefore, as I live, says the Lord Jehovah, I will do to thee as thy rage and jealousy shewn against My people, in thy hatred of them, deserves. I will make Myself known among thy sons, when I shall judge thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, have heard all the words of scorn thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying: 'They are laid waste! They are given to us to possess!'[2] 13. You have talked loftily with your mouth against Me, and have heaped up your words against Me: I have heard it! 14. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When the whole earth rejoices, I will make thee a desolation. 15. As thou wert glad over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was laid waste, so will I do to thee. Thou shalt be a desert, O Mount Seir, and all Edom; and they shall know that I am Jehovah."

Such would be the fate of the enemies of the people of God. Turning now to the land of Israel, the prophet cheers his countrymen by the promises of Jehovah, that it would see the cup of sorrow its children had drained, put to the lips of all their heathen foes.

"XXXVI. 1. Further, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, saying: Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah. 2. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because the enemy said respecting you: 'Ha! the ancient hills are ours now:' 3. therefore prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because they laid you waste and panted after you on every side, that you might become a possession to the remnant of nations (spared by the Chaldæans), till ye rose on the lips of every idle talker, and were in evil report among the peoples: 4. therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah. Thus says the Lord Jehovah, to the mountains, and hills, and ravines,[3] and plains, and to the desolate ruins and forsaken towns, which served for a prey and a scoff to the remnant of the heathen round: 5. Verily, in the glow of My anger do I speak against the

[1] **Ezek. xxxv. 9-15; xxxvi. 1-5.**
[2] Literally, "for food."
[3] Literally, "torrents."

remnant of the heathen, and against all Edom, who with gladness of heart and deadly scorn have appropriated My land, to desolate and plunder it—6. Prophesy,[1] therefore, respecting the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, and hills, and ravines, and plains, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I have spoken in My wrath and indignation, because ye have borne the contempt of the nations. 7. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: I have lifted up My hand (and sworn); verily the nations round you shall bear their (share of) contempt (in turn)!"

On the other hand, God will bless His own land.

"8. But ye, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your verdure and yield your fruits to My people Israel, for they will soon come! 9. For, behold, I am for you, and will turn My face towards you, and ye shall be ploughed and sown. 10. And I will increase men on you —all the house of Israel—all of it, and the towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11. And I will increase men and cattle on you and they will multiply and be fruitful, and I will make you be inhabited as in former times, and shew you more good than in your earlier days, that ye may know that I am Jehovah. 12. I will make men—My people Israel—walk on you, and they will possess you, and you will be their inheritance, and you will no more be left without inhabitants.[2] 13. Thus says the Lord Jehovah, Because they say to you, 'Thou land (of Israel) art a devourer of men,[3] and hast made thy people childless;' 14. therefore thou shalt no longer devour men, nor make thy people childless any more, saith the Lord Jehovah. 15. Neither will I cause thee to bear any longer the contempt of the nations, nor wilt thou be any more the scorn of the peoples, nor cause thy sons[4] to be childless any more."[5]

The banishment of Israel had been brought about by its own sins. But the heathen among whom they were scattered had profaned the Divine name on their account, imputing their calamities to the weakness of their national god.

"17. Son of man, when Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their way and their doings; their conduct was vile in My eyes, as

[1] **Ezek. xxxvi. 6–17.** [2] Literally, "orphaned." [3] Feminine.
[4] Literally, "nation." [5] Correction of the Hebrew by the Masorites.

the foulest uncleanness. 18. Therefore, I poured out My wrath on them for the blood they had shed in their land,[1] and because they had polluted it with their foul gods. 19. And I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the lands; I judged them according to their way and their doings. 20. But when they came to the heathen peoples, they made My holy name to be profaned, for men said of them, 'These are Jehovah's people, and (yet) are driven out of His land!' 21. But now I must vindicate My holy name, thus brought into dishonour among the heathen, through Israel."

Their deliverance would be due to this jealousy of His own honour, on the part of Jehovah, not to any merit in His people.

"22. Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I do this not for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which ye have caused to be dishonoured among the heathen, among whom ye are come. 23. I shall therefore vindicate the holiness of My great name, which ye have caused to be dishonoured among the heathen, (bringing discredit on it among them), that the heathen may know that I am Jehovah, says the Lord Jehovah, when I shall shew Myself holy in you before their eyes. 24. For I will take you out from among the heathen, and gather you from all countries, and bring you again to your own land."

To restore former relations with them, however, was impossible while they were still estranged in heart. Nor could any radical change be expected from their own initiative. Their conversion must come from God Himself. He will, therefore, make them in reality His children, by bringing about in their hearts a true spiritual change. He will cleanse them from their sins and put His spirit into their renewed hearts.

"25. And that ye may be cleansed (from your sins), I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and I will make you clean from all your filthiness and from all your foul gods. 26. And I will give you a new heart

[1] In violence and by human sacrifices. **Ezek. xxxvi. 18-26.**

and put a new spirit within you; I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh; 27. and I will put My spirit within you,[1] that ye may walk in My statutes and keep My laws and do them, 28. and ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God."

They will henceforward loathe their former ways, and God will bless the land and give them prosperity. But all this is a free gift, bestowed on the undeserving.

"29. And I will keep you from (again falling into) your (old) uncleannesses, and will call forth corn (out of the earth) and make it yield richly, and bring no famine on you. 30. And I will increase the fruit of the tree, and the yield of the ground, that the reproach of hunger may no more be cast on you among the heathen. 31. And ye will think, then, of your evil ways and wrong doings, and abhor yourselves for your iniquities and abominations.

"32. But, be it known to you, that it is not for your sakes I do this, says the Lord Jehovah: be ashamed and blush for your ways, O house of Israel!

"33. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: When I have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and caused you to dwell in the towns of your land; when the ruined places are rebuilt, 34. and the wastes tilled again, so that they are no longer desert before the eyes of all that pass by; 35. then will men say, 'The land, which was once desolate, is become like the garden of Eden; the waste, deserted, and ruined towns are walled round and inhabited.' 36. Then the heathen (peoples) left round you will know that I, Jehovah, rebuilt what was ruined, and planted again what was laid waste. I, Jehovah, have said and will do it.

"37. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: I will yet be sought by the house of Israel, to do this for them, (and, in answer to their prayers,) I will increase them with men, like a flock—like the flock for the holy offerings, the flock at Jerusalem in the time of her feasts;[2] the cities now deserted will be filled with flocks of men, and all shall know that I am Jehovah."

Such were some of the discourses by which Ezekiel sought to rekindle the hopes of his fellow-exiles, and recall them to a higher spiritual life, in preparation for their

[1] **Ezek. xxxvi. 27-37.** [2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 7. Deut. xvi. 16.

future return to Palestine. The deep gloom that had settled on all, however, after the fall of Jerusalem, seemed beyond removal. The nation was, apparently, dead. Could it rise again? Not only was national life gone; there remained nothing of Israel but some dry bones from which the flesh was wasted and gone. Such thoughts may have been uttered around the prophet. But no difficulty shook his faith in what Jehovah had promised. Yet the terrible comparison of his people to the dead dwelt in his thoughts, till in the end it rose before him in a brighter aspect as the central glory of a prophetic vision. In this he seemed carried away by the Spirit of Jehovah to the plain or valley near Tel Abib, familiar to him of old as the scene of the vision of the Cherubim. Now, however, to his horror, he found it full of dry, withering bones[1]—the wreck of a vast host slain by the sword. Wandering over the wide expanse, the multitude of these ghastly relics of mortality and their bleached dryness, the very embodiment of death, filled him with awe, and, while thus overpowered, Jehovah seemed to address him.

"XXXVII. 3. 'Son of man, will these bones live (again)?' Then said I, 'O Lord Jehovah, Thou knowest.' 4. Then said He to me, 'Call to these bones, and say to them, "Ye dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah. 5. Thus says the Lord Jehovah to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. 6. And I will create sinews on you, and make flesh grow on you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and acknowledge that I am Jehovah."'

"7. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I did so, there was a noise and a commotion, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8. And I looked, and, behold, sinews came on them and flesh grew upon them, and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9. Then said he to me, 'Call, O son of man, call to the breath of life,

[1] **Ezek. xxxvii. 3-9.**

and say to it, "Come from the four winds, O breath (of life), and breathe into these slain, that they may live."' 10. So I called as He commanded me, and the breath (of life) entered them, and they came to life, and stood up on their feet, a very great army. 11. Then said He to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel! Behold, (your fellow-exiles) truly say, "(We are not only dead, but) our very bones are (scattered), dry, (and bleached): we have lost hope, we feel ourselves utterly gone (as a nation)." 12. Therefore prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to rise out of them, and will bring you to the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I open (even) your graves, (as it were), and lead you forth from them, O my people, 14. and put My Spirit in you, so that you may live (again) and settle in your own land. Then shall you know that I, Jehovah, have spoken, and performed, says Jehovah.'"

JUDGMENT SCENE, FROM EGYPTIAN "BOOK OF DEATH."

This cut shews the Egyptian ideas of the future world, which had been for ages known to the Jews. Ezekiel's vision only describes a *national* resurrection, but it seems to imply a belief in the resurrection of the body. See Dan. xii. 2. I owe the following explanation to my learned friend, Dr. Birch, of the British Museum:

"The subject of the plate is the vignette of the 125th chapter of the Ritual. It is entitled, 'The going to the Hall of the two Truths and making the deceased to see the faces of the gods.' It is the scene of the great Judgment of the Dead. On the left Osiris is seated, holding a crook in his left hand and the three-thonged whip in his right. He is mummied and on a throne. The crook and whip have mystical significations of his power over the lower world. The object before him is a panther's or calf's skin placed on a pole stuck into a kind of pedestal. This, I think, indicates the word *nem*, or 'second life.' He is in a shrine. Before him is inscribed, 'Osiris, the good Being, lord of life, great god, ruler of eternity, resident in the land of Akar (Hades)—resident in the west—lord of Abydos, king of ages."

Before the shrine are the following:—

1. Two rows of 21 gods of the dead, in all 42, each of whom received a confession of the deceased that he had not committed one of the 42 sins which formed the Egyptian decalogue. The deceased, Nasamsi, is seen kneeling and addressing them. Beneath the frieze of the hall are (2) a table of offerings, gourds, and water plants. Under the table are two jars with water plants entwined. Above is an illegible inscription apparently intended for "the gift of offerings in Hades." 3. Two forms, Shai, "Fate," and Renut, "her nurse." 4. The symbols Meskhent, "the cradle." 5. The Amt, "devourer" of wicked souls—annihilation. 6. Harpakhrat, on a crook, the symbol of the New Birth. 7. Thoth, recording on his patella, or writing desk, the decision of the god as to the future state of the soul. 8. The balance, surmounted by (9) the cynocephalus, Anubis, jackal-headed, holding the weights of the scale of Truth on the one side of the balance, and Horus holding the heart of the deceased on the other scale. The inscription over the head of these figures says, "Said by the lord of Hermopolis (Thoth), great god, chief of Hesar—he has put the heart of the Osiris (deceased) Nasamsi, in its place." The other inscription in this portion refers to Anubis, "The head of the divine place (Anubis)—he says his heart is in the midst of the balance filled with the Osiris Nasamsi." Above, also, is "Horus," the name of the god. 10. 11. 12. The deceased introduced by the Two Truths into the Hall. The inscription here says, "Truth the ruler of the west, she gives his name, in his abode he is to be united to his cell (body) for ever." The last inscription reads, "Like him who is head of the west (Osiris), she gives the two hands to thee, Osiris Nasamsi, born of the lady of the house Satarbuni, whose word is true."

Of the tenant of an Egyptian mausoleum, Mr. Gerald Massey gave this description in a recent lecture: "With his viscera separately preserved in four canopic jars, his body steeped for seventy days in wine and natron, and bound up in a linen swathe, some seven hundred yards in length, woven without seam; his hair made up into a ball and coated with bitumen; his teeth and nails covered with gold leaf: the collar of Nine Beads, worn by Isis, encircling his neck, the beetle-type of transformation placed within his breast, the mummy was deposited in the sarcophagus called 'Hen-Ankhu' (the chest of the living); a copy of the book of breath was his pillow, and the leaves of the book of life were the lining of his coffin; his types of protection, duration, and renewal were around him, and with the eyes of the sun and moon to light him through the long darkness, the Egyptian entered his tomb, called the 'Good Dwelling.' A number of copies of the Shebti, or Double of the Dead, were ranged in the Serdab, to signify repetition, and the Ka-image of his spiritual self was erected in the tomb as his link with the living."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VISION OF THE FUTURE.

In the passages quoted in the preceding chapter we have samples of the preaching of the prophets of the Exile, of whom Ezekiel was only one. He did not content himself, however, with his sublime vision of the resurrection of the dead, so well fitted to revive the community from its dejection, but followed it up, soon after, with glowing pictures of the glory of the nation when thus restored. Aflame with patriotic enthusiasm, which in his case was identical with zeal for Jehovah, he anticipated a wondrous future. The deportation of the Ten Tribes to Assyria, more than a century and a half before, had effaced all ancient grudges and rivalries from the breasts of the Two Tribes then still left in the land, and had awakened a spirit of brotherhood which yearned for a time when the whole nation, so long divided and estranged, would unite under one head, as in the happy days before Rehoboam. The prophets no less than the people looked forward to this much-desired consummation. Hosea[1] predicted its certain attainment under some future king. Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, in succession, dwelt on it, to cheer the darkness of troubled times. The day was coming when "Judah and Israel would be gathered again and appoint themselves one head." "Ephraim would not envy Judah,

[1] Hos. i. 11; iii. 5. Amos ix. 11. Mic. ii. 12, 13; v. 2. Isa. xi. 13. Jer. iii. 18.

nor Judah vex Ephraim." "Judah would come, together with Israel, out of the land of the North, to the land of their fathers." The misery of the past had risen in great measure from the rupture of the kingdom. Constant civil wars had weakened both North and South, and left them a prey to their enemies. The Ten Tribes, with their wide and rich territory, had been so numerous and powerful compared with Judah, that they had been recognized as, virtually, the nation entitled to be known as such, that is, as "Israel," and it was impossible to conceive of any national restoration which would not include them. Even in Ezekiel's time, moreover, their colonies still existed in Assyria, and the deliverance of these seemed as easy as that of Judah from Babylon.

With the confident expectation of this return of all the Twelve Tribes to their own country,[1] and their happy union under one ruler, a confident belief was cherished that this king would be either their national hero, David, himself, returned to life again, or one of his descendants. It was necessarily taken for granted by both prophets and people, that the leader, thus expected, would restore the kingdom on the lines of its ancient constitution, for they knew nothing higher. There might be a great advance in the religious and moral condition of the community, its glory might be immeasurably developed, and its king might reign in hitherto unimagined uprightness; but, at its highest, the restored kingdom would only be a nobler repetition of that of David. Hence the utterances of Ezekiel, like those of all his order, could picture the glories of the future, only in imagery drawn from the

[1] Jer. xxx. 10–18; iii. 18; xxxi. 5. Ezek. xxxvi. 24: xvi. 53; xx. 40; xxxvii. 12; xxxix. 25; xlvii. 13; xxxiv. 23; xi. 15: ix. 9, etc.

past. That Jewish ideas and aspirations fill the visions of the prophets, need not therefore surprise us. It was quite in keeping with this inevitable mode of thought that the prophets looked forward to the future glory of Israel, as necessitating the return of the Ten Tribes from exile. Nor was it possible for Ezekiel to think or speak except as a Jew, with the longings and expectations of his day. He also, therefore, proclaimed the approaching deliverance of the Ten Tribes, and their union with Judah, under a common head, who, he says, will be no other than their national boast, David, the great king of the yet undivided people. The word of Jehovah, he tells us, came to him,[1] saying:

"XXXVII. 16. Son of man, take one rod, and write on it, 'Judah, and the sons of Israel (Simeon and Benjamin) united with him;' then take another rod, and write upon it, 'Joseph, the representative[2] of Ephraim and all the house of (Northern) Israel joined to it:' 17. and join them, one rod to the other, so that they may be united in thy hand. 18. And when the sons of thy people say to thee, 'Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by this?' 19. Answer them: Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the rod of Joseph, held by Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel joined with him, and will put it to this rod of Judah, and make them one rod, that they may be one in My hand. 20. (To teach thy people this) the rods on which thou writest shall be in thy hand, before their eyes: 21. and thou shalt say to them: Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the heathen, whither they are gone, and gather them from all parts, and bring them to their own land. 22. And I will make them one people in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and one king shall reign over them all: and they will no longer be two peoples, nor will they any longer be divided into two kingdoms. 23. They will no more defile themselves with their foul gods, or with their abominations, or with their (former) transgressions; but I will help them from all their backslidings[3] by which they have sinned, and will cleanse them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their

[1] **Ezek. xxxvii. 15 23.** [2] Literally, "tree," "rod."
[3] Septuagint. Ewald. Hitzig. Eichhorn.

God. 24. And My servant David will be king over them,[1] and they will (thus) all have one shepherd;[2] and they will walk in My laws, and keep My statutes, and do them. 25. And they will dwell in the land that I gave to Jacob, My servant, in which your fathers dwelt; they will dwell there, they, and their children, and their children's children for ever; and My servant David will be their prince for ever.

"26. And I will make a covenant of peace with them, a covenant which will endure for ever, and I will bless them,[3] and increase them, and set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also will be over them;[4] I will be their God, and they will be My people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I, Jehovah, set apart Israel as holy (to Myself), when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

This exquisite picture of absolute security and prosperity could not, however, be realized as complete without an assurance of protection from hostile attacks, and this, therefore, is added. The wild races of Scythia had spread terror over all Western Asia, in the days of Josiah, and were still remembered with dread. The heathen nations, as a whole, in their opposition to the kingdom of God, are represented, therefore, under the figure of a second invasion of the Holy Land by these barbarous hordes. But He who had led His people back from captivity would prove Himself their Almighty defender; the foe would be triumphantly overthrown, and Israel, finally delivered from all fear, would enter on a lasting career of prosperity.

"XXXVIII. 2. Son of man,[5] said the word, set thy face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,[6] and

[1] Ezek. xxxiv. 23. [2] **Ezek. xxxvii. 24-28.** [3] Targum.

[4] They will, as it were, dwell in My tent. [5] **Ezek. xxxviii.**

[6] "Rosh," translated "chief" in ver. 2, is regarded as a proper name by some, but most translators render the phrase as in the text. Schrader (*Keilinschriften*, 2te Aufg., 1882) accepts Magog as equivalent to Scythians, their country being, apparently, the southern parts of European Russia, and the wild regions north of the Caucasus. Tubal and Meshech are as frequently associated together in the Assyrian in-

prophesy against him, saying, 3. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: ' Behold, I am coming to thee, O Gog, thou prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal; 4. and will lure thee on, and put rings in thy jaws,[2] and draw thee forth, thou and all thine army, horses and riders, all gorgeously clad, a vast multitude with great shields and small, all wielding swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Phut[3] are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; 6. (the Cimmerian) Gomer,[4] and all his squadrons; the

scriptions as in the Old Testament. In these inscriptions Tubal is written "Tabal," and, according to Schrader (*Keilinschriften*, 83), bordered on Cilicia, and seems to have been what was afterwards Cappadocia. It was famous for "great horses." Meshech he regards as having lain N.E. of Cappadocia, in lower Armenia. It is mentioned by Tiglath-Pileser I. (B.C. 1100) along with Tubal or Tabal.

[1] **Ezek. xxxviii. 3-6.** [2] See vol. v. p. 87.

[3] Hebrew. These are in the farthest south from Babylon, where Ezekiel lived. The Asiatic Cush, or Ethiopia, lay in Central and Northern Babylon. Fried. Delitzsch. Phut was the name, according to Ebers, of some wandering tribes of Arabia. (*Egypt u. die B. Moses*, p. 63); but Sayce thinks it was the Somali country in Eastern Africa.

[4] Gomer was the name among the Hebrews for the Cimmerians of antiquity, the Cimbri of Roman times, and the Cymry or Celts of still existing communities. Their original seat, in the farthest north known to the Hebrews or Greeks, is alluded to in the Odyssey.

> The shores of deep Oceanus;
> Of the Cimmerian men the race and town
> Were there, in mist and cloud enwrapped; the sun
> Never looks down upon them with its rays;
> Nor when it marches up the starry skies,
> Nor when from heaven it turns again to earth;
> But over wretched men sad night is spread.

This dismal description refers to the country north of the Black Sea, to the Crimea, and the shores of the Sea of Azof. The Black Sea, indeed, bore the name of The Cimmerian in antiquity, and other parts in these regions equally mark the local predominance of the Cymric race. The name Crimea itself is, in fact, a corruption from theirs. Warlike and fierce from the remotest ages, ancient history often records their inroads on more civilized regions; as here in Ezekiel, where they are predicted as coming on a war of desolation from the extreme north, in alliance with other nations. The invasions of Asia Minor, by a part of them, driven from their homes by the Scythians, were a standing alarm for seven centuries before Christ. But the larger and braver half clung to the remote regions they had always held, amidst the shades of woods which stretched, unbroken, to the Hercynian Forest in Germany. Latterly, the peninsula of Jutland became their chief seat, and was known by their name; but they spread to France, Spain, and Britain, and still shew their splendid vitality in the Celtic populations of Western Europe, including our own islands. The Welsh, indeed, call themselves Cymry, and Cumberland still perpetuates the remembrance of their having long held it against the English tribes from Germany. In Assyrian, Gomer is Gimir (*K. A. T.* 80). This is very nearly "Kimir," or our Kimmerians; that is, Kymri. Pressed by the Scythians of the

house of Togarmah,[1] in the farthest north, and all his bands; many people with thee! 7. Be ready,[2] prepare thyself (O Gog!) thou, and all thy hosts who gather round thee, and be thou their leader. 8. After many days thou wilt be mustered; at the end of years thou wilt come into a land[3] (then) redeemed from the sword, (and dwelt in by those, once exiles, but, now,) gathered out of many peoples, to the mountains of Israel, which so long lay waste, (but will then be the home of thy tribes), brought forth out of the nations, and dwelling in security. 9. Thou (Gog) shalt rush on, coming like a tempest, like a storm-cloud, to cover the land, thou, and all thy hosts of many peoples, with thee."

Russian steppes, they threatened to overrun the Assyrian empire, under a leader called Teispes, but were defeated by Esarhaddon, in B.C. 670, in a great battle on the north-eastern frontier of his kingdom, and driven westward into Asia Minor. There they sacked the Greek town of Sinope, and spread like locusts over the fertile plains of Lydia. Among the gifts sent to Nineveh by the Lydian king Gugu or Gyges—a name in which we may see the Gog of Ezekiel—were two Kimmerian chiefs, whom he had taken with his own hand. Gyges was afterwards slain, in battle with the barbarians, and it was some years before they could be entirely extirpated.

In the thick darkness of the remote ages to which we are carried back, when reading Ezekiel, it is difficult to identify and localize each nation mentioned. Magog, for example, would almost seem to have been a vague term, among the Hebrews, for the barbarous races of northern Asia; like the name "Scythians" among the Greeks. Jerome, indeed, gives it as the opinion of the Jews of his day, that it meant the "terrible and countless Scythian nations," and while Knobel further identifies it with the Slavs of to-day, Gesenius and others understand by Rosh, the modern Russians. Ezekiel describes the four as, alike, a wild and terrible race of mounted men armed with the bow; a description which suits the Scythians who invaded Palestine in B.C. 625. But the name was also applied to other peoples, for Tubal and Meshech appear not only as barbarian warriors, riding on steppe horses, but, in some branches of their stock, at least, as a trading people, who brought vessels of iron and copper to Tyre for sale. Tubal, in fact, is simply the Persian word for brass or copper, and Meshech is thought by some to be the neighbouring people, the Chalybes, who were especially known in antiquity for their copper mining. It seems to support this explanation, that Herodotus mentions the Tibarenes and the Moschi together, as nations living south-east of the Black Sea, and says that they worked copper mines, and were included in the nineteenth satrapy of the kingdom of Darius. The Assyrian inscriptions, moreover, speak of a people and land of Muski, in North Assyria, which there is hardly room to doubt is the Meshech of Scripture.

[1] Togarmah is mentioned by Ezekiel, as a people trading in horses and mules at the fairs of Tyre, and as allied with Gomer, or the Cimbri, in an approaching invasion of Palestine. In this connection it is noteworthy that the Armenians, the Georgians, and the races of the Caucasus, still trace their descent, through one Torgona, from Gomer, and still call themselves "The House of Torgona," or, as we have it, Togarmah.

[2] **Ezek. xxxviii. 7-9.**

[3] The land = the people of the land (Israel).

The invasion of Israel by this fierce and terrible army is now described. The towns lie open, in fancied security, apparently the prize of a sudden attack.

"10. Thus says the Lord Jehovah:[1] In that day thoughts will come into thy heart, and thou (Gog) wilt lay wicked plans, saying, 11. 'I will burst into the open country of unwalled villages: I will come upon them that live in peace, dwelling in (fancied) security; who live without walls, or bars, or gates.' 12. (This thou wilt do) to obtain plunder and gather spoil, to lay thine hand on the (newly rebuilt) towns, lately in ruins, and on a people gathered (by Me, Jehovah) out of the nations—(a people) already possessing cattle and goods, and inhabiting the centre land[2] of the earth."

The traders of widely different nations naturally follow a host drawn from so many lands, to buy up the plunder and slaves. On such a harvest they counted, and they rejoice in proportion as it becomes evident that relentless spoil is the one object of the war.

"13. Sheba, and Dedan, and the traders of Tarshish, (like beasts of prey), with all their young lions, (greedy for gain as young lions for prey, who come to traffic in the booty), will say to thee, 'Hast thou come to plunder? Hast thou gathered thy host to collect spoil? to carry off silver and gold, to take cattle and goods, to heap up a great booty?'"

The remorseless guilt of such an invasion of a nation dwelling in peace, and offering no cause for attack, is further insisted upon.

"14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Is it not thus that thou wilt stir thyself, and come from thy home in the farthest north, in the day when My people Israel dwells in peace—15. thou and many nations with thee, all on horse: a mighty host, a vast army, 16. and shalt advance against My people Israel, covering the earth like a cloud? At the end of days I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may learn who I am,

[1] **Ezek. xxxviii. 10-16.**

[2] Literally, "navel." Note this conception of the position of Palestine.

when I shew Myself holy before their eyes, in thy punishment, O Gog!"

This retribution will surely strike down the invader. Nature itself will be convulsed, to overthrow him utterly.

"17. Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by My servants,[1] the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied, long years together, that I would bring thee against them? 18. It shall come to pass in that day, in the day when Gog comes against the land of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah, My wrath shall rise up in My nostrils! 19. For in My indignation, in the glow of My anger, have I spoken thus: 'Verily, in that day there will be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. 20. The fish of the sea, the fowls of the heaven, the beasts of the earth, and all that moves on the face of the ground, and all men on the face of the land, will tremble before Me, and the mountains will be thrown down, and the cliffs of the hills fall, and every wall sink to the ground. 21. And I will call aloud to all My mountains, for the sword against Gog,' says the Lord Jehovah; 'every man's sword will be against his fellow. 22. And I will execute My judgments against him with pestilence and with blood, and I will rain on him, and on his hosts, and on the many nations with him, a storm-deluge of rain, and hailstones, and fire, and brimstone. 23. And I will shew My greatness and My holiness, and will reveal Myself in the eyes of many nations, that they may know that I am Jehovah.'"

This final overthrow of the enemies of Israel, thus vividly described, was nevertheless too grand a theme to be dismissed without another outburst of prophetic jubilation. The certain triumph of the Hero King is therefore once more announced in the next strophes of this grand prediction.

"XXXIX. 1. Son of man, prophesy respecting Gog, and say, Thus speaks the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am coming to thee, O Gog, thou prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal! 2. I will lure thee out, and

[1] The prophecies here referred to may not have been preserved, or those in which the judgments of God on the heathen are foretold may be meant. **Ezek. xxxviii. 17-23; xxxix. 1-2.**

lead thee forth,[1] and draw thee on, from the furthest north, and bring thee to the mountains of Israel! 3. And (there) I will smite the bow out of thy left hand, and cause thy arrows to fall from thy right hand.[2]

"4. And thou shalt fall on the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy hosts, and the peoples who are with thee; I will give thee for meat to the birds of prey of all kinds, and to the beasts of the field. 5. Thou shalt fall in the open field, for I have spoken it, says the Lord Jehovah. 6. And I will send fire on (the land of) Magog (itself), and on them that dwell in security on the sea-coasts,[3] and they shall know that I am Jehovah. 7. Thus will I make known My holy name in the midst of My people Israel, and not suffer it to be any longer profaned, that the heathen may know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel. 8. Behold, it comes—it is (as good as) done, says the Lord Jehovah! This is the day of which I have spoken!"[4]

The victory will be complete and the booty immense. The weapons of the slain will supply fuel for seven years to Israel, whose land had little wood, and the burial of the dead will take seven months; men being employed even longer in searching for bones that had been overlooked, to remove all traces of defilement from the holy soil.

"9. The men of the towns of Israel will go out (after the catastrophe), and there make fires of the arms (cast away by the fugitives, or left by the dead)—the large shields and the small, the bows and the arrows, the war clubs,[5] and the spears; seven years long will they use them for fuel. 10. They will not need to bring fagots from the field, or to cut down fuel in the *yaars*,[6] for the wood of these arms will serve them for firing, and they will spoil those that spoiled them, and plunder those that plundered them, says the Lord Jehovah."

[1] Draw thee with leading-strings. Ewald.

[2] Bows and arrows were the special weapons of the Scythians. Jer. v. 16; vi. 23. "Horse-bowmen" is the name given them by Herodotus. Herod., iv. 46. **Ezek. xxxix. 3-10.**

[3] The distant coasts and islands of the ends of the earth, from which the allies of Gog came.

[4] The great day of Jehovah. Joel ii. 11. Zeph. i. 14. Isa. ii. 12; xiii. 6. Jer. xlvi. 10. Ezek. xiii. 5. Amos v. 18. See also references from these texts.

[5] Hitzig thinks the rods used to drive on the horses meant, but this seems very poor.

[6] Vol. iv. p. 374.

The corpses of enemies were generally left unburied, or at most were interred without the usual rites, only to prevent pestilence or defilement; slain foes thus passing into the underworld as "uncircumcised," that is, discredited and put to shame.[1] In this case, the dead will be left unburied, a prey to the vultures and wild beasts; but, after these have feasted on them,[2] the bones will finally be collected and thrown ignominiously into one of the deep ravines on the east side of the Dead Sea, outside the limits of the Holy Land, of which the Jordan will form the boundary,[3] and thus the soil of Israel will be purified from the defilement of unburied human remains.

"XXXIX. 11. In that day I will appoint Gog a burial place, in Israel, the ravine of the invading hosts of the wicked,[4] on the east of the (Dead) Sea, and it will bar the way of invaders or passers-by,[5] and there they will bury Gog and all his host, and they will call it 'The ravine of the host of Gog.' 12. And the house of Israel will be employed seven months in burying them, to cleanse the land. 13. The whole people of the land will help, and it will be a famous day for them when I glorify Myself thus, says the Lord Jehovah. 14. And they will set apart, permanently, chosen men to travel through the land, to bury any bones of the invaders that have been overlooked, that the country may be thoroughly cleansed. They will begin their search after the seven months (of burying) have ended. 15. And if any of them, passing through the land, see a human bone, he will set up a mark beside it, that the buriers of the dead may bury it in the ravine of the host of Gog. 16. (And as a memorial of the event) the

[1] Ezek. xxviii. 10; xxxii. 19, ff.

[2] Ezek. xxxix. 17.

[3] Ezek. xlvii. 18.

[4] Literally, "passers-by." It is in one case rendered in our version as "transgressors" (Prov. xxvi. 10), and the verb of which it is a participle is often translated to "transgress." It may mean either the "invaders," the "wandering hordes," or the "godless." The name seems to be given from the burial of the host of Gog in it. It is now unknown what place the prophet intended, if, indeed, the allusion be not merely figurative. Eichhorn changes the word Oberim into Abarim, and thinks the valley of that name is meant. **Ezek. xxxix. 11-16.**

[5] I have here combined the renderings of different critics.

name of Hamonah—the host—will be given to one of the towns of the land.[1] Thus the land will be cleansed!"

The number of the slain will be so great that Jehovah again calls on the vultures and wild beasts to come to the ghastly feast on human flesh prepared for them.

"17. Thou also, son of man,[2] call to every kind of bird of prey and to every beast of the field: 'Assemble and come; gather from all sides to My sacrifice (feast), which I have slain for you—a great sacrifice (feast) on the mountains of Israel—to eat flesh and drink blood.'

"18. 'Ye shall eat the flesh of heroes, and drink the blood of princes of the earth, rams, and lambs, and goats, and fed bullocks of Bashan.[3] 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till be drunken, from My sacrifice (feast) which I have slain for you. 20. And ye shall have your fill at My table, of horses and riders,[4] heroes and men of war of all arms, says the Lord Jehovah.'

"21. Thus shall I display My glory among the heathen, and all their nations shall see My judgment that I have executed, and My hand that I have laid on them. 22. And the house of Israel shall know that I, Jehovah, am their God, from that day on, for ever; 23. and the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their sin; and that I hid My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their oppressors, so that they all fell by the sword, because they had been unfaithful to Me. 24. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid My face from them."

The purpose of the destruction of Gog, like that of the restoration of Israel, is declared by the prophet to be the glory of the Divine name before the heathen and Israel. Meanwhile, after the Return, the justice of God in the exile of His people will be acknowledged, and He will no more veil His face from them, but will pour out on them His Spirit, the pledge of His abiding favour.

[1] This clause is obscure. [2] **Ezek. xxxix. 17-24.**

[3] The heroes and princes are called by these names of animals used in sacrifice Isa. xxxiv. 6. Jer. xlvi. 10. The usage is frequent in Scripture.

[4] Keil. Ewald. Eichhorn.

"25. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah:[1] I will now bring back again the exiles of Jacob (to their own home), and have pity on the whole house of Israel, and be jealous for My holy name. 26. And they shall bear, (as penitents), their shame for all the transgressions (formerly) committed against Me, when they (once more) dwell safely in their own land, none making them afraid.

"27. When I bring them back again from the peoples, and gather them out of the lands of their enemies, and shew Myself holy towards them before many nations, 28. they shall know that I, Jehovah, am, and was, their God, (alike) when I banished them among the heathen, and (afterwards) when I gathered them again into their own land, leaving none behind (in captivity). 29. And I will hide My face no more from them, but will pour out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord Jehovah."

Ezekiel had now painted the future of the people of God, till their triumphant establishment in their own land, after the overthrow of all opposition; their hearts changed from stone to flesh, and the Divine Spirit bestowed on them, to secure their permanent fidelity to Jehovah. But this higher and nobler theocracy demanded, like that of Moses, a central sanctuary, a body of laws, and a distribution of the soil amongst its population. As became the scenery of visions, those picturing the restoration and its attendant wonders had, throughout, been in the highest degree figurative, and so is their culmination in the chapters that follow. The overthrow of Gog had been painted in the boldest poetical images; all the powers of nature conspiring to fight for Israel, as when Joel sees the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood;[2] and hears Jehovah shout the battle-cry as He rushes down from Zion, and the heavens and earth seem to shake at the overthrow of the heathen, in "the great day of the Lord."

Such language must not be treated as if it were prose.

[1] Ezek. xxxix. 25-29. [2] Joel, chapters ii. and iii.

The same principle must be kept in view in the remaining chapters of Ezekiel's visions, which present in words equally figurative the features of the new Jewish kingdom, which he sees, in imagination, rising from the wreck of the past. He writes as a Jew and as a priest, using the imagery of the little world in which he moved; the only material he had in which to embody his thoughts.

Carried off to Babylon in opening manhood, from his priestly functions and daily associations, every detail of these had impressed itself on the mind of Ezekiel with all the vividness and tender sympathy felt through life for the reminiscences of our early years. The Temple in all its aspects was the central object in his recollections. Its buildings, in all their parts and uses; its worship, in all its rites; its economy in the minutest particulars, had been familiar to him from childhood, and stood out in his memory with unfading clearness, in the land of his exile. The restored kingdom, when it should come, could in his opinion have no grander sanctuary than an idealization of that on Mount Zion, where Jehovah had sat between the cherubim. It was, indeed, inevitable, as has been noticed, that the materials of his visions should be drawn from the range of his experience; for the human mind cannot create, but only contrast and combine, or develop. We have seen how, in his conceptions of the cherubim, he avails himself of the mythological colossi around him in Babylonia;[1] though even these, if we think of it—the wings, the legs, the various faces in strange union—are only presentations of natural objects in new conjunctions. Our angels, in the same way, are only beautiful human figures; our heaven is only a succession of exquisite earthly

[1] Vol. v. p. 401.

landscapes. We cannot, indeed, avoid transferring our ordinary ideas to the future world. Accustomed to cities, we raise a great city of God in our imaginations of the future, just as in an age or region where cities were unknown, we might have pictured heaven as a garden, like Eden.

To Ezekiel and his contemporaries, the grand future in store for the nation could only be a glorious renovation of the sacred past. The Temple, the forms of public service, the maintenance of the priests, the division of the land among the tribes, the establishment of the expected Ruler, and all else, might vary in details from the practice of former times, but must repeat their leading characteristics. Yet the descriptions in which the prophet sets them before us were only visions, not literal anticipations. Looking forward into the magnificent Messianic future, he paints it in such imagery as alone was possible to him, or comprehensible by his nation. It was left for after ages to read the true meaning by fuller spiritual light, and separate the material symbol from the truth it embodied.

That the pictures of the restored land are only to be regarded as the scenery of prophetic dreams or visions is clear. I may quote a few proofs. Three thousand cubits are stated as the extent of the precincts of the New Temple on Mount Moriah, but that hill could not possibly afford a space remotely equal, even on the lowest estimate of the cubit, to over 1,300 yards,[1] or three-quarters of a mile square. Nor can the priestly laws he announces be viewed as intended for an authoritative code, since they were disregarded after the return from Babylon. Thus Zerubbabel,

[1] Ezek. xlii. 19, 20. Conder makes the cubit sixteen inches (*Handbook*, p. 37). Other estimates make it eighteen or twenty inches. The commonest cubit is of 22.6 inches, which is evidently the Phœnician cubit of 22.3 inches at Carthage.

and Joshua the high priest, followed the Mosaic rules, not those of Ezekiel, in consecrating the Temple,[1] disregarding even the day named for the great solemnity by the prophet —the first of the first month,[2] for which they substituted the first of the seventh.[3] If, besides, there are resemblances between the Temple of Ezekiel and that of Solomon, there are also striking contrasts. The former was to be north of Jerusalem;[4] the other rose to the south of the city. In the new sanctuary numerous chambers were to be provided for the priests and Levites while on duty; and the sacred order was no longer, as of old, to be scattered in separate communities through the country, but in a special district assigned to it. The territories allotted by the prophet to the king comprise almost the whole centre of the land, and they cannot be alienated; to prevent alike the impoverishment of the Crown, or an excuse for its encroachment on the lands of the people.[5] Equal divisions of the country are assigned to the different tribes, that none might envy its neighbours.[6] In contrast to the exclusiveness of the past, lands are set apart, between those of the tribes, for aliens, that no one willing to work might suffer poverty. The prince is required to provide the offerings and necessaries of the Temple, and thus secure the due performance of public worship; rich gifts to him being demanded from the community, that this may not be burdensome. New laws, moreover, are prescribed for the Temple service and for the priests. But in none of these vital points was there even an attempt, after the Return, to realize Ezekiel's ideal. It was seen to be only a fitting close to the marvellous visions so peculiar to him.

[1] Ezek. xlv. 18. Ezra iii. 2.
[2] Ezek. xlv. 18.
[3] Ezra iii. 1–6.
[4] Ezek. xl. 2.
[5] Ezek. xlv. 8.
[6] Ezek. xlvii. 14.

If further proof were wanted that this reconstitution of Israel and its territory was only a glowing picture of the imagination, it is supplied by the features with which it closes. The prophet anticipates the return of a golden age. Jerusalem, the capital of the new kingdom, is to be transformed into a second Eden. A river of living water from the Temple hill will turn even the desolation of the wilderness of Judæa into beauty and fertility. How far he may have expected the realization of his visions as the immediate result of the return from Babylon, is difficult to tell. Warmed by patriotic and religious enthusiasm, Ezekiel may have fondly dreamed that his splendid fancies would be realized as soon as his people were re-established in their own land.

It was on the tenth of Nisan, "the beginning of the" fourteenth "year,"[1] after the fall of the Holy City—the twenty-fifth of his own exile, that the closing cycle of his visions was vouchsafed to Ezekiel. The day was that on which preparations began for the Passover, commemorating the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and thus, beyond all others, naturally awoke thoughts of the great future of the nation, when rescued from its present Captivity. Years before, "as he sat in his house" at Tel Abib, in the company of the elders of Judah, he had fallen into a trance, in which he seemed to be borne to Jerusalem, and placed in the midst of the Temple courts.[2] In the same way it appeared now as if he had been carried away to Judah, and set down on a very high mountain on which was a town, towards the south. It was Mount Zion, or rather Moriah, on which the Temple of Solomon had stood, which is lower than the hills round, but was now appar-

[1] Ezek. xl. 1. [2] Ezek. viii. 1–3.

ently raised above them,[1] as in the vision of Micah. A being in form like a man, but resplendent with golden light, stood, with a cord of flax and a measuring rod in his hand, at one of the gates of a great temple, and proceeded to measure its various parts. The enclosing walls; the gates; the tables, eight in number, on which the beasts for sacrifice were to be slaughtered; the chambers for the subordinate necessities of the Temple service, for the singers, and for the priests; the magnificent porch; the various courts; the thickness of the walls, and their height; the doors and their posts, were all in turn measured, and the details written down minutely by the prophet. The inner walls of the Temple and its inner doors were seen to be sculptured with alternate cherubim and palm-trees; an altar of wood stood in the Holy Place, and there were numerous cells or chambers, in some of which the priests would eat the parts of the "holy things" that fell to their share, while others were store-rooms for the materials of the various offerings,[2] or robing chambers for the officiating ministers of the altar.

Hardly, however, had the angel finished all the measuring, before the glory of Jehovah appeared advancing towards the east gate, by which it had left the sanctuary in the former vision,[3] its splendour lighting up the earth before it, while a mighty sound, like that of many waters, heralded its approach. Presently the sacred building was filled with this blinding glory, the symbol of the presence of Jehovah, and Ezekiel heard a voice saying to him, as he stood in the inner or priest's court:

"XLIII. 7. Son of man![4] Behold, this is the place of My throne, the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the

[1] Mic. iv. 1. Isa. ii. 2.
[2] Ezek. xlii. 13.
[3] Ezek. x. 19; xi. 1, 23.
[4] **Ezek. xliii. 7.**

children of Israel for ever! The house of Israel will no more defile My holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their impurity,[1] or by the dead bodies of their kings, in their funeral vaults,[2] (within the city)."

Manasseh and Amon had been buried in the royal gardens,[3] close to the southern end of the Temple; but such a desecration of the sacred hill would no longer be permitted in the approaching stricter age. The presence of a dead body within the holy city at all, far more, close to the Temple, would, now that the Levitical system was to be supreme, be a defilement, which would make both priests and worshippers "unclean."

"8. For they used to set their thresholds close to Mine,[4] and their door-posts by My posts, with only a wall between Me and them, and thus they defiled My holy name, by the abominations they committed (close to My house), so that I consumed them in My anger. 9. But now they will put away their foul idolatry, and the dead bodies of their kings, far from Me, and I will dwell among them for ever."

The prophet is then directed to tell his people what he has seen—the structure and details of the Temple, with all the laws and ordinances to be communicated to him respecting it—if they shew the proper spirit of penitence and obedience.[5] Instructions for the consecration of the new altar follow,[6] shewing some variations from that of the altar of the Tabernacle or of Solomon's Temple, though for the most part the same.[7] The officiating priests, in this and all other cases, however, are limited to the descendants of Zadok,[8] the representative of the elder branch

[1] Their idolatry. [2] Some read, "after their death."
[3] 2 Kings xxi. 18-26. [4] **Ezek. xliii. 8-9.** [5] **Ezek. xliii. 10, 11.**
[6] Ezek. xliii. 18. [7] Exod. xxix. 37. Lev. viii. 15. 2 Chron. vii. 9.
[8] Zadok was the son of Ahitub, of the line of Eleazar (1 Chron. xxiv. 3), and remained faithful to David during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 24). He also anointed Solomon in opposition to Adonijah (1 Kings i. 32). The high priest, Abiathar, on the other hand—a dignitary descended from the line of Ithamar, Eli's line supported Adonijah (1 Kings i. 7), and was removed on this account from his

of the family of Aaron, who since the time of David had superseded the line of Eli, which was that of Ithamar, Aaron's younger son.[1] Special rules are laid down for them, some of which are striking. In the old, irregular times, carelessness and indifference had marked the services of the slaves attached to the temple—the descendants of the Gibeonites, condemned by Joshua to be hewers of wood and drawers of water,[2] and also, it has been thought, the bastards of the community, and the "slaves of Solomon"[3]—apparently captives taken in war, whom David, Solomon, and the dignitaries of the Temple had used for menial duties at the Sacred House. They were no longer to be thus employed. Descended from tainted parentage, they were not to be allowed to enter the new sanctuary.[4] Henceforward, only priests and Levites should minister in God's house. But even among these, such as in the past had lent themselves to idolatry, were no longer to discharge the higher duties of their office, but to be confined to the humblest services. None but the descendants of Zadok should act as priests at the altar and in the sanctuary, because they had kept themselves free from all taint of heathenism.[5] The unfaithful priests should only be keepers of the gates, and servants to the people when offerings were presented—killing the victims; a task till now

office by Solomon, Zadok being put in his place; the new line thus established retaining the dignity to the fall of the kingdom.

[1] If, as some critics allege, the separation of the tribe of Levi into priests and Levites was made, not at Sinai, but after the Exile, how does it happen that Ezekiel lays stress on this line of Zadok as the rightful priests? Their claim rests on something before David's time—what could it be but the appointment by Moses?

[2] Josh. ix. 27. [3] Ezra viii. 20. Neh. vii. 60. [4] Ezek. xliv. 6–9.

[5] By "Levites," in Ezek. xliv. 10, are meant all descendants of Levi—priests or "Levites." Members of both classes had supported heathenism, and were now to be degraded. This is implied in the expression "they shall bear (the penalty of) their iniquity." The fidelity of the descendants of Zadok is noticed (Ezek. xliv. 15). They "kept the charge of My sanctuary when," etc.

permitted to any offerer. As under the old law in Exodus,[1] the dress of the new priests was to be exclusively linen, that they might not be polluted by the heat of woollen garments.[2] Their full official dress, moreover, was only to be worn while they were actually on duty, and was to be laid aside before leaving their own court in the Temple, that the people might not be burdened by being required to be always Levitically clean, which would otherwise be imperative, lest the "holy garments" might touch them.[3] Their hair was neither to be shaved off nor let grow without trimming, but was to be kept carefully cut.[4] As of old, in the laws of Leviticus, they were to drink no wine when on duty.[5] Hitherto only the high priest had been forbidden to marry a widow;[6] now it was prohibited to all priests, except in the case of a priest's widow.[7] The whole order was thus to be specially guarded from even the appearance of laxity. Their general duty was declared to be, teaching the people the distinction of holy and unholy, clean and unclean,[8] and to act as judges in all disputes, deciding according to the Law, as they had hitherto done in specified cases.[9] At the great religious festivals, they were to see that all the requirements of the Law were complied with, and they were to take care that the Sabbath was duly honoured. The old statute [10] respecting their being defiled by coming near a dead body was re-enacted, but it was added, that even in cases when their presence beside the corpse of a relative had been hitherto permitted, the subse-

[1] Exod. xxviii. 42.
[2] Ezek. xliv. 17, 18.
[3] See Lev. vi. 11, 27. Ezek. xlvi. 20. Exod. xxix. 37; xxx. 29.
[4] Ezek. xliv. 20. Lev. xxi. 5, 10.
[5] Ezek. xliv. 21. Lev. x. 9.
[6] Lev. xxi. 14.
[7] Ezek. xliv. 22.
[8] Lev. x. 10. Deut. xxxiii. 10. Ezek. xxii. 26, or xliv. 23.
[9] Deut. xvii. 8; xix. 17; xxi. 5. Ezek. xliv. 24.
[10] Lev. xxi. 1–3.

quent necessary purification and suspension from duty for seven days were now insufficient, and a fortnight's suspension was substituted. So "holy" were they to be. For these duties they were to receive corresponding emoluments. They were no longer, as in the past, to have glebes in common, though they were to have ground for their houses,[1] but were to be supported by a share of the sacrifices and offerings, and from the tithes and first-fruits, which belonged to Jehovah, and were made over to the priests as His public servants.[2] The prohibition to eat that which had died of itself or had been torn by beasts was continued.[3]

Directions follow as to the space in the land to be set apart to Jehovah, after the division of the country among the tribes.[4] A tract measuring,[5] apparently, about seven miles from east to west, and three from north to south, was to be marked off for the Temple, the priests and the Levites, and on each side of this a space of the same breadth for the prince; stretching from one side of the country to the other. With this, the future king was to content himself, refraining from all oppression, and honouring Jehovah by a just and noble reign.[6] But this separation of a sacred and a royal district from the rest of the country, was never attempted; the whole vision being treated as outside the sphere of practical politics or economics. After insisting on just weights and measures,[7] the

[1] Ezek. xliv. 29–31; xlv. 4.

[2] Comp. Lev. ii. 3; vi. 16, 17, 18; vii. 6, 7; xxvii. 21. Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26. Deut. xviii. 4. Num. xviii. 13; xv. 19; xviii. 19; xv. 20, 21.

[3] Lev. xxii. 8; xvii. 15. [4] Ezek. xlv.

[5] Keil and some others, think 25,000 "reeds" intended, but cubits seem to be implied (Ezek. xlv. 1). The space is very great if reeds are meant—42 miles by 17.

[6] Ezek. xlv. 9.

[7] The "bath" in Ezek. xlv. was a fluid measure, the "ephah" a dry measure See vol. iv. p. 328. The various shekels named are shekels of different weight.

prophet prescribes the public contributions to be made to the prince for the temple offerings and sacrifices, which were to be primarily under his care.[1] Then follow rules as to the sacrifices for people and prince, and for the festivals, shewing many curious variations from the parallel Mosaic laws.[2] The feast of Pentecost, however, is wholly omitted, and so are the sounding of the trumpets on the first, and the Day of Atonement on the tenth, of the seventh month;[3] a very strange fact if Ezekiel, according to the new criticism, was the true founder of Judaism and its Levitical laws.

The rules for the respective shares of the prince, and the people, in public worship, are next given. The east gate of the new temple[4] was to be shut during the week, but open on the Sabbath and the day of the new moon, and the prince was to enter by this outer gate, and stand at the gate of the priests' court within, worshipping Jehovah from the gate while the sacrifices were being offered on the altar, and then leaving by the way he entered. The peo-

[1] Ezek. xlv. 13-17.

[2] Ezekiel commands the offering of a young bullock as a sin-offering on the first day of the first month. Moses had commanded the offering of a he-goat, in addition to the burnt and meat-offering (Num. xxviii. 15). He also ordered a special sin-offering in the new moon of the seventh month, but instead of this, Ezekiel appoints sin-offerings for the first and seventh days of the first month (Ezek. xlv. 21, 22). The blood also is to be sprinkled on the door posts of the forecourts, instead of on the horns of the altar and towards the mercy seat. Moses knows nothing of such a universal offering for the people as Ezekiel orders on the seventh of the first month (Lev. iv.-vi.). Instead of seven oxen and seven rams daily (Ezek. xlv. 23), Moses appoints two oxen, one ram and seven lambs (Num. xxviii. 19). The meat-offering (Ezek. xlv. 24) is different from that prescribed by Moses (Num. xxviii. 20); and the solemnities for the Passover and Tabernacles in Ezekiel also vary from the ancient directions. At Tabernacles, Moses commands that the number of oxen offered, lessen with each day—thirteen, twelve, eleven, and so on (Num. xxix. 13, ff.). Moses ordered two rams only to be offered; Ezekiel seven; and he omits altogether the fourteen lambs offered under the old law (Num. xxix. 13). Nor has he said anything of those appointed for the Passover and Tabernacles, though they could not be dispensed with. Ezra did not follow Ezekiel's laws. (Compare Ezra iii. 1-6; Ezek. xlv. 18.)

[3] Ezek. xlv. 21-25.

[4] Ezek. xlvi.

ple also were to worship before this inner gate on the Sabbaths and new moons.[1] Details are given of the gates through which people and prince are to enter and leave on different occasions; so apparently trifling a matter seeming weighty to a mind essentially ritualistic, like that of Ezekiel. The evening sacrifice is not mentioned, and the regulations for that of each morning differ from those of Moses.[2] Even the cells in which the priests were to boil and bake the various offerings not burnt on the altar, are described, since they were part of the Temple arrangements. Brief laws for gifts and inheritances, granted by the prince, close the legislative portion of the narrative, so strange in all its features.

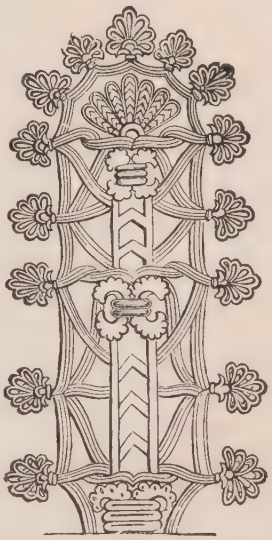
The triumphant return, the victory over all enemies, the glory of the new Temple, the laws of worship, and the dignity of the future king had now been recounted. But could it be thought that the new Jerusalem, which was to be so much grander than the old, would be allowed to stand in the midst of a district bare and waterless like the territory of Judah? Nature around must be in keeping with so much glory. The sanctuary was to be in the noblest sense the earthly habitation of Jehovah; the land, therefore, in which it stood must be a second Paradise. Hence, as rich streams watered Eden, an abundant flood poured forth from under the threshold of the Temple, swelling speedily to a great river, as it flowed towards the east, the Temple itself having an eastern aspect. Dividing ere long into various streams,[3] like the river of Paradise, these made

[1] Moses orders only two sheep to be offered on the Sabbath. Ezekiel requires six sheep and a ram to be offered (Num. xxviii. 9; Ezek. xlvi. 4). The prophet leaves the "meat-offering" to the ability of the offerers; Moses leaves nothing to choice (Num. xxviii. 9). In contrast with the young ox, six sheep, and one ram, of Ezek. xlvi. 6, Moses enjoins two oxen and seven sheep (Num. xxviii. 11).

[2] Num. xxviii. 4, 5. Ezek. xlvi. 13, 14. [3] Ezek. xlvii. 8.

even the great and terrible wilderness of Judah fruitful and lovely. Emptying themselves at last into the Dead Sea, they sweetened the bitter waters, and filled them with life, so that thenceforward fishermen could ply their trade on its hitherto lonely shores. Wherever the streams reached, fertility and life would rise, while their banks on both sides would be lined with all kinds of fruit trees, whose leaf never faded, and from whose branches the clusters would always be hanging, for each month they would yield new crops, while their fruit would be for food, and their very leaves for healing.[1]

In a land, the most barren parts of which were to be thus delightful, the Twelve Tribes would find a joyful home ; half of them occupying the land to the south of the Temple, and half of them that towards the north.[2] The thirsty Negeb, or South Country, as well as the terrible desert of Judah, would be turned into fertile uplands.



THE ASSYRIAN TREE OF LIFE.

The bounds of the Holy Land in these blissful times are next described. On the north it will reach from the Mediterranean, south of Hamath on the Orontes, to the Hauran below Damascus ; on the east, to the south end of the Dead Sea, enclosing Gilead and the old territory of the tribes across the Jordan ; on the south it will stretch from "Tamar," some-

[1] Compare Rev. xxii. 2.

[2] Ezek. xlvii. and xlviii.

where near the head of the Red Sea, to Kadesh in the Negeb, and thence, on to the Mediterreanean; and on the west, from this point "till a man come over against Hamath."[1] These bounds, it is needless to say, Israel never even approximately possessed, after the Return.

In this great territory the Twelve Tribes were to hold portions reaching, in each case, from east to west, across the whole land; seven of them on the north of the section in the centre of the land, made over to the Temple, the priests, and the prince; the rest on the south of it. All, moreover, were to live on the west of the Jordan, though of old only nine and a half tribes had done so. The New Jerusalem was to be 4,500 "reeds," or 9,000 yards—a little over five miles—square,[2] and the names of its twelve gates were to be those of the twelve tribes of Israel.[3]

This abstract is in itself overwhelming proof that the whole vision is only the imaginary picture of a condition of great national wealth and prosperity, expressed in Oriental hyperbole. No one thinks of taking the almost parallel visions of St. John in the Apocalypse as literal descriptions. We do not expect to see the holy city, the New Jerusalem, actually coming down from God, out of heaven,[4] nor that it will literally be foursquare, with walls and gates like an ancient town, nor that the walls will be over 200 feet high, or the city itself 1,500 miles square, or that its buildings and spires will rise 1,500 miles into the air,[5] and yet this must be done, if the description is to be understood otherwise than figuratively. To Ezekiel and St. John alike, the only aim was to convey the highest

[1] Ezek. xlvii. 20.
[2] Ezek. xlviii. 30. A reed = 6 cubits, *Dictionary of Bible*, art. "Reed."
[3] Rev. xxi. 12.
[4] Rev. xxi. 2-10.
[5] Rev. xxi. 16.

conception of magnificence as each imagined it most vividly presented. Living in the age of Rome and great provincial cities, St. John thinks of a New Jerusalem such as he describes. Imbued with a strongly Jewish and priestly bias, Ezekiel sees a glorious temple rise before him, and all the details of a re-establishment of the Church in Palestine, with transcendent splendour. To the mind of St. John, the Temple had ceased to be a central religious thought; in that of Ezekiel, the priest, it was supreme. In both, the inspired writer is left free to express the surpassing glory of the future, in the only way possible to his modes of thought, and the ideas of his age.

Recent critics have sought to make Ezekiel the father of Judaism; but, as already shewn, it is much more correct to trace it to King Josiah.[1] The evidence urged for the new theory, not only does not harmonize with the actual facts, but is distinctly contrary to them. Whatever seems to support it is put forward prominently; whatever tells against it, is at once lightly declared unhistorical. The narratives of the Pentateuch are pronounced to be legends of the time of the Exile or later; the genealogies of the Books of Chronicles, mere tricks of the priests; the historical psalms, only legends thrown into poetical form, though Ezekiel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, who were alive when these legends are said to have risen, treat them as actual events well known in the distant history of the nation. It is easy to establish any theory if one deal as he pleases with what contradicts it. But to do so, on an arbitrary estimate of what seems reasonable to a biassed critic, is unsafe in the extreme; for one school

[1] Vol. v. p. 254.

rejects that which another, not less entitled to confidence, accepts as trustworthy.

The supposition of the new school is, that Ezekiel having given an impulse to Judaism by his writings, it was developed during the exile in Babylon, by unknown writers, who invented the system now found in Leviticus and other sections of the Pentateuch, and palmed them off on their contemporaries as having come down from the days of Moses. But nothing whatever is known of any such ecclesiastical forgers having ever existed in Babylonia. The whole theory is a mere assumption, supported by not even a tittle of historical evidence. Nor is this the worst. According to the latest advanced critics, the inventors of the "Priestly Torah," that is, of the Levitical legislation, almost as a whole, commended it to public respect, and introduced it to the worship of God and the practice of daily life, as of Divine origin, while they knew it was not. They invented the whole story of the law-giving on Mount Sinai, the construction of the Tabernacle, the separation of the tribe of Levi to the priesthood, of the conquest of Eastern Palestine, and much else, to induce the people to accept as laws given directly from heaven, more than a thousand years before, what they had themselves secretly concocted in Babylon! One of the latest historians[1] of Israel, indeed, carries this so far, as to pronounce the whole narrative of the stay in Egypt, the Exodus, the wilderness sojourn, the existence of the Tabernacle, the conquest of Eastern Palestine, the record of Joshua, that of the Judges, and even that of Saul, mere worthless legends of late date, which he passes over with contemptuous silence!

[1] Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel.*

This "Priestly Torah," invented in Babylon, was brought, we are told, to Palestine, on the return from Captivity, and having been read aloud to the people, was accepted by them, though hitherto entirely unknown, as the ancient religious law of the nation, observed by their fathers. But, supposing so gigantic an imposition on a bigoted and ultra-conservative race in any case possible, we should expect that it would be specially prominent in books like those of Ezra and Nehemiah, who were most exacting in ritual, and that allusions to it would abound in their pages. On the contrary, however, we nowhere find it mentioned. The covenant to which the returned exiles bound themselves has no connection, strange to say, with ceremonial law, but pledges them, as its great points, to abstain from marriage with others than their own race, and to keep the Sabbath,[1] duties enforced by laws which, confessedly, do not belong to the so-called "Priestly Torah" at all, but to the earliest days of Jewish history.

[1] Exod. xxxiv.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT BABYLON.

Among the captives led off from Judæa by Nebuchadnezzar, in B.C. 605, immediately after his great victory over the Egyptians at Carchemish, were a number of youths of the best Jewish families, transferred to Babylon for service at court; it may be, in compliment to members of the Chaldæan party in Jerusalem, or, possibly, as hostages for the good behaviour of the city. Among these was the future prophet Daniel,[1] of unknown but evidently illustrious origin. He first comes before us while still in his opening prime, but even then is marked not only by his physical beauty and intelligence, but even more strikingly by his strength of character[2] and religious fervour and sincerity. Exile in his case,[3] and in that of others of his

[1] "One who judges in the name of God." [2] Dan. i. 6.

[3] The year is given in Dan. i. 1, as the third of Jehoiakim. But in Jer. xxv. 1, the fourth year of Jehoiakim is stated to have been the first of Nebuchadnezzar, and he is said to have defeated Pharaoh Necho at Carchemish in that year (Jer. xlvi. 2). Delitzsch explains the apparent contradiction by referring to 2 Kings xxiv. 1, from which he understands that the third year of Jehoiakim means the third year of his vassalage to Nebuchadnezzar (Herzog. 2te Auf., art. "Daniel"). Dan. i. 1 is held by Zöckler and Delitzsch as noting the time when the campaign began, which ended, next year, in the submission of Jerusalem. In the third year the Chaldæan army was set in motion; in the fourth, the battle of Carchemish opened the way to Palestine, and then followed the march to it, all during the reign of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father. Herzog, 1te Auf., art. "Daniel." Zöckler's *Daniel*, p. 28. Keil's *Einleitung*, p. 410.

The reckoning of the years of a reign, it should be remembered, is often different. Queen Victoria ascended the throne in June, 1837, but was not crowned till June, 1838. Her reign might be counted from either date, if custom allowed, and it may have been thus in Palestine. Further, 1838 might be called either the first or second

class, was, in reality, the highest good fortune, giving them an opening in life at the court of the greatest monarch of the age, and under his special favour.

The kings of Assyria and Babylon, in order the more easily to govern their subjects of different races and languages, were accustomed to select from the captives or hostages of each nation, young men of noble birth,[1] and bring them up in the royal palace, where they were put in charge of the chief of the eunuchs,[2] and received the highest education the age afforded. Thus in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, we accidentally learn that he had such a school in his palace at Nineveh, for the children of nobles of his foreign provinces. "Belibus," he tells us, "of the race of Babylon, who had been brought up from early childhood in my palace, was set by me over the kingdom of the Sumirs and Accadians."[3] This custom of the kings of Assyria and Babylon, thus illustrated by the inscriptions of Nineveh, till these records came to light, was known to us only from the Book of Daniel, the exact local colouring of which in this instance, as in so many others, is so singularly vindicated by the testimony of contemporary documents.

year of her reign, according to the months intended. Up to June it was the first year; after that it was the second. In the *Speaker's Commentary* the dates are harmonized as follows: Expedition against Pharaoh Necho, twentieth year of Nabopolassar = second of Jehoiakim. Battle of Carchemish, twenty-first of Nabopolassar, third of Jehoiakim. Pursuit of Necho, first year of Nebuchadnezzar = fourth year of Jehoiakim.

[1] "Princes" (Dan. i. 3). The word thus translated is not Hebrew, but from the Sanscrit, and shews a time and place where there was contact between the Semitic and Aryan races, as in the case of Babylon with Media and Persia. It occurs here, and twice in Esther.

[2] Ashpenaz is equivalent to Assu-ibni-Tir ("The Lady Istar, the goddess, formed him in the womb"). Such a name speaks for itself as only possible while Istar was yet honoured—that is, while Babylon still flourished. Lenormant's *La Divination*, p. 133.

[3] *Cylinder of Bellino*, i. 13. Smith's *Sennacherib*, p. 27. Smith's *History of Assyria*, p. 111. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 23.

A similar practice in Turkey, while still a conquering power, has been noticed by various travellers. The pages of the seraglio, the officers of court, and most of the public functionaries and local governors, were drawn from a body of Christian youths taken captive in war, or bought as slaves. The finest and cleverest were sent to the palace, and put in charge of the chief of the white eunuchs, though they themselves were not mutilated. Schools were provided, at which they received the best education the country could give, including a perfect knowledge of Turkish in its greatest purity. Their food was carefully prescribed, and they wore a special dress as cadets in the royal service. Guardians watched them night and day, and reported on their conduct and attainments, by which their future advancement was determined.[1] A curious proof of similar arrangements at Nineveh and Babylon has come to light in the examination of the clay tablets brought in vast numbers from the library of Assurbanipal of Nineveh. They are found to have been mainly intended for the use of the



Cuneiform Inscription.—Warka.

[1] Habesci's *Ottoman Empire*, and Tavernier's *Relation, etc.*, quoted in *Pict. Bible.* vol. iii. p. 213.

masters and pupils of the palace school, where the youth of both sexes were trained for the royal service. A large proportion of them consists of syllabaries, grammars, dictionaries, histories, geographies, and scientific manuals. Even the exercises and tasks of the scholars have in some cases been recovered; one tablet among others containing the lesson for a young princess in Assyrian reading and spelling.[1] It was indeed no light matter to become an adept even in the living language of Assyria or Babylon, with its multitudinous combinations of arrow-headed or wedge-shaped characters, different pronunciations of which gave wholly different meanings to the same word. But another language, the Accadian, which had long ceased to be spoken, needed to be thoroughly mastered, to acquire a liberal education, all the venerable treatises on the gods, on science, and on magic, being preserved in it alone. It was, in fact, the "language of the Chaldæans,"[2] and Daniel, as a student, had specially to apply himself to it; the "Chaldæan language" of Bible times,[3] used in parts of the Book of Daniel itself,[4] being then known as Aramean. It is a curious evidence of the wide-spread education of the Babylonian population, that, as nearly all could read and write, the forms of handwriting on the tablets and cylinders are almost as numerous as in the modern world.

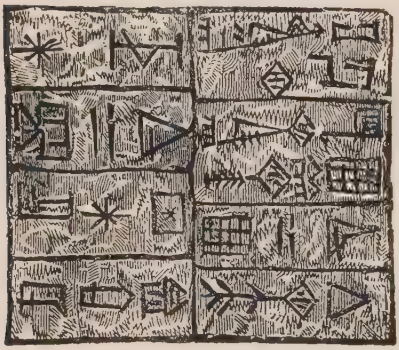
The illustrations of "Daniel" from the monuments and tablets, are numerous. Thus, the change of name given to the young prophet and his companions on entering the palace school, was in accordance with the custom of the

[1] It is in the British Museum. [2] Dan. i. 4, 17.

[3] The use of the word "Chaldæans," as equivalent to "wise men," is unknown in the Assyrian or Babylonian inscriptions and records. It rose only after the destruction of the Babylonian empire. Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, 2te Auf., 1882, p. 429.

[4] Dan. ii. 4, 12.

age. Psammetichus, the famous king of Egypt, when living in Nineveh, had an Assyrian name given him by Assurbanipal.[1] Similarly, that of Daniel was changed to Balatsu-usur or Belteshazzar, "(Bel) protect his life," and that of one of his companions from Azariah to Abed-nebo —"the servant of (the god) Nebo,"[2] which frequently occurs in Assyrian documents.[3] Shadrach and Meshach, his other associates, have had their names so changed in the Hebrew transcription as to obscure their original form, but we have the authority of so competent a scholar as Lenormant for saying that "all these names, when not altered beyond recovery by the errors of copyists, are strictly Babylonian, and could not have been invented in Palestine in the second century before Christ," the date to which the composition of the Book of Daniel is sometimes referred.



Ancient Hieratic, or Sacred Writing. Warka.

Three years spent in the training school of the palace sufficed to advance Daniel to high proficiency in the "wisdom" of the day. In one point, however, he steadily resisted the influences around him. It was taken for

[1] Lenormant, *Lettres Assyriologiques*, vol. i. p. 56. Oppert, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, etc., etc.* 8 partie, vol. i. p. 595. The name was Nabù-Sezibanni. [2] *K. I.*, 2te Auf. (1882), p. 430. Abednego should be Abednebo.

[3] *La Divination*, p. 182. The dignitary called "chief of the eunuchs," had under him an official called "the Melzar" (Dan. i. 11), and both are frequently mentioned in the Assyrian tablets. "The Melzar" seems to have been the chief butler. Lenormant, pp. 196–7.

granted that he and his companions would adopt the religion of Babylon; but nothing could induce him to abandon the faith of his fathers, even in a matter so subordinate as its prescriptions respecting food. As a high honour, the palace-school cadets were supplied from the royal table; but Daniel and his companions shrank from eating or drinking anything "unclean" in itself or from having been consecrated to idols. This made it impossible for them to touch anything brought from the table of the king, all the food or drink on which was first dedicated to the gods, by the offering of a part of it on their altars.[1] At the risk of life, therefore, they would not taste such viands. Men, even in their youth so bravely faithful to their consciences, could not fail one day to rouse the nation to a new religious life, by the quickening power of their example.

The city in which Daniel thus found himself, was the greatest in the ancient world. Herodotus, who visited it about B.C. 450, within a century after the departure of the Hebrews, while its walls and buildings were still perfect, describes it as forming a square of nearly fourteen miles on each side.[2] Others[3] give a different measurement, but the smallest leaves a space of over ten miles square within the walls, which is four times more than that covered by intramural Paris, and fully twice as great as the size of London within the bills of mortality.

The greatness of Babylon was largely due to its position. Built on a broad and level shelf of tertiary rock, which

[1] Keil, *Daniel*, p. 64. The laws of Levitical purity were thus known before the Exile, not invented after it, as the new critics affirm.

[2] Herod., i. 178; 120 stadia on each side.

[3] Strabo, xvi. 1, § 5. Q. Curtius, *Vit. Alex. Mag.*, v. 1. Clitarchus, in Diod. Sic., xi. 7, § 3. Ebers gives the circuit of Babylon as more than 45 miles. *Ägy. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 16.

spread out from under the rich soil of the wide plains. the last trace of the northern hill system, it enjoyed a healthy and secure site, even amidst the periodical inundations around. Defended on the south by the broad waters of the united Euphrates and Tigris, which ere long widened into those of the Persian Gulf, then reaching much farther north than at present, the wide stretches of the desert protected it on all other sides. High prosperity, also, was secured by its position, for it stood on the great line of trade between the Mediterranean and the East, at the point where the Euphrates contracts, from a broad expanse, to the full current of a deep and magnificent stream, bearing down to the wharves of the great city the wealth of the north, as the waters on the south bore from the ocean that of India and Africa. There was no stone for its mansions and houses, but the deep clay of the plains was easily made into sun-dried bricks, and the bitumen of the north, brought down the river, supplied cement.

The walls of this gigantic hive of men were in keeping with the vast limits they enclosed. Rising out of great moats on every side, they towered, in the opinion of Herodotus and Ctesias, three hundred feet into the air,[1] while their breadth was such that chariots with four horses could pass each other on the wide top,[2] which was said to have been fully eighty feet across ; a breadth, which, great as it is, does not seem improbable, as the thickness of the walls at Khorsabad has been found to be no less than seventy-eight feet ; even this, swelling out to ninety, where there had been bastions. Strabo, in the century before Christ,

[1] Herod., i. 178. He says they were 200 cubits high and 50 broad. Herodotus lived B.C. 484–408. Ctesias was born about the time when Herodotus was approaching his end.

[2] Duncker, *Gesch. des Alterth.*, i. 856.

when the walls of Babylon had been long left to moulder away, tells us they were, still, fifty cubits high, and thirty-two feet broad. Duncker, however, regards the estimate of Herodotus as exaggerated, but thinks that, since the Median wall, the first line of defence of the land, was a hundred feet high, and twenty feet broad, and as, even in Xenophon's day, the wall of Nineveh was, still, a hundred feet high, we may, with some confidence, accept Pliny's statement, that the walls of Babylon were two hundred feet high, from the fosses round them, and had a proportionate thickness of from thirty to forty feet. This breadth, indeed, is only what might be expected, when we remember that three chariots could pass each other, on the top of the wall of Nineveh, though, of course, none may actually have run there. It is, however, possible, that slanting ascents, such as we see inside the mosque of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, reaching upwards to the galleries, or, as in the great Campanile, at Venice, may have made it practicable to drive chariots to the top, where a strong parapet protected the sides. Ebers, strange to say, fancies the walls were only seventy feet high, when perfect; so widely do scholars differ, in apparently the simplest points.[1] But the wonderful magnitude of the mural defences of Babylon can only be realized, when we remember that there were two walls, an outer and an inner, and that the outer, or great wall, enclosed a space as great as the Department of the Seine—a hundred and ninety-nine square miles; while even the inner wall guarded a hundred and seventeen square miles, a space much larger than the whole size of London.[2]

[1] The authorities for the height of the walls are: Herod., i. 178. Diod. Sic., ii. 7, § 3. Plin., *H. N.*, vi. 26. Strabo, xvi. 1. § 5. Jer. li. 58. Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*.

[2] Oppert, *Expédit. en Mésop.*, vol. i. pp. 220, ff.

Such a wondrous girdle of defence from the tribes of the desert or more civilized enemies, must have involved an almost inconceivable amount of labour. Constructed of burnt bricks, alternating with layers of reeds to bind them together, and cemented with bitumen, the walls contained, without including 250 towers which rose above them, not less than 5,560,000,000 square feet, and were built up of at least three times that number of the largest bricks used by the Babylonians.[1] A hundred gates with their great posts, leaves, and sills, of brass, and their bars of iron, permitted entrance to the city.[2] There were also inner walls on each side of the river, which flowed through the centre of the city, with huge gates at the end of each of the broad and wide streets which ran towards the stream, alongside which handsome quays stretched out for trade and embellishment. Ferry-boats plied across the river from each gate ; and a drawbridge, raised at night, offered further accommodation to the citizens. Inside this space the ordinary houses of the inhabitants rose, in many cases, three or four[3] stories high ; but they sank into insignificance when compared with the great palace-quarter of the kings, which itself was a city seven miles round. Three or four vast buildings stood within its enclosure,[4] the wall of which, Herodotus tells us, was "very little inferior in strength" to that of the city itself.[5] The size of the royal dwellings may be judged from the fact that the mound from which one of them towered up covers thirty-seven acres,[6] while another, still known as the Kasr, or

[1] Canon Rawlinson computes that 18,765,000,000 of the largest bricks would be needed. *Expositor*, 1883, p. 349. Ebers says that these walls were a greater wonder than even the Pyramids. *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 16.

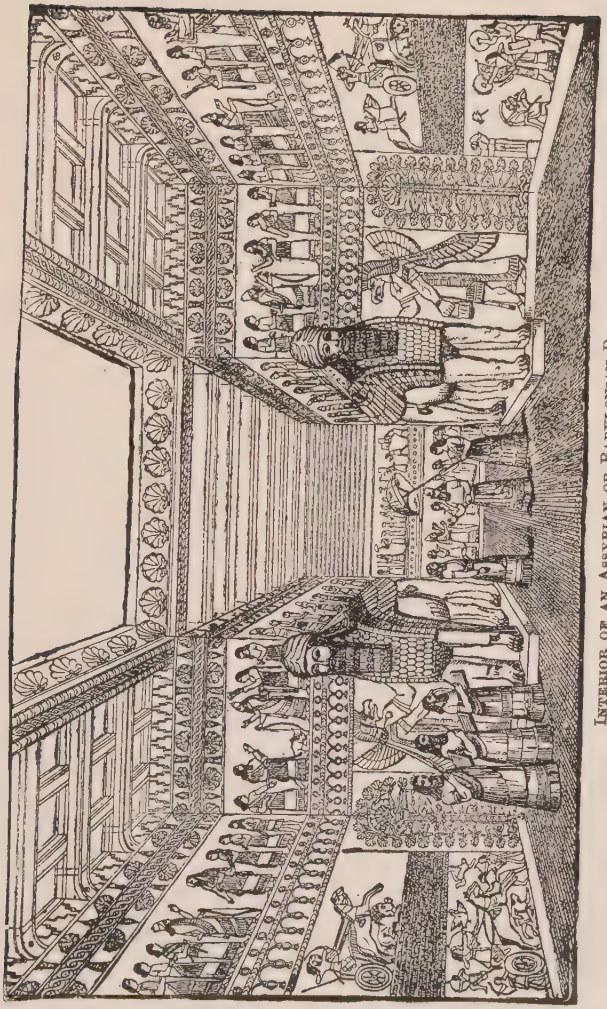
[2] See Isa. xlv. 2.

[3] Herod., i. 180.

[4] Oppert says four.

[5] Herod., i. 181.

[6] Oppert, *Expédition scientifique*, vol. i. p. 157.



INTERIOR OF AN ASSYRIAN OR BABYLONIAN PALACE.

"Palace," is 800 yards long by 600 yards broad.[1] Near the centre of this gigantic platform, which, though seventy feet high, was only the artificial terrace on which the vast fabric stood, a fragment of the palace itself still rises. Walls, piers, and buttresses of brick masonry, wonderfully preserved, and in some parts adorned with pilasters, still help to bring before us perhaps the very building in which Daniel spent his best years; but the ruins are too fragmentary to yield any clue to the plan of the structure as a whole. It doubtless, however, contained a labyrinth of courts, great halls, galleries, and smaller chambers, gorgeous with colours, or lined with sculptures or paintings, of scenes of war and of the chase.[2] Even the outside walls, indeed, were resplendent with the brightest colours, countless fragments of their bricks still remaining covered with a thick enamel, over brilliant blue, red, yellow, and black.[3]

The palace gardens were one of the wonders of the world. Nebuchadnezzar had married a Median princess, and thinking that she sighed for her native mountains when looking out on the dull level of the Babylonian plains, he resolved to beguile her of her longing for home, and at the same time shew how much he loved her, by commanding that wooded hills should be created in the "paradise" of her palace. Arch upon arch of masonry forthwith rose like a pyramid, to the height of 400 feet, over a square of equal size each way, as the framework of a vast accumulation of artificial mounds and hills of earth, on which waved forest trees of huge diameter, transplanted in their full glory, and thickets of flowering shrubs, interspersed with cool chambers, royally

[1] It is to be remembered that 880 yards are half a mile.

[2] Ezek. xxxii. 14, 15.

[3] Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 507.

furnished, at successive heights. To make the charm complete, flowing streams glided along each terrace and sparkled down every slope, amongst the groves and woods; the water for them being raised to the summits by hydraulic machinery.[1] The site of this miracle of skill and inventive genius has been supposed, by Oppert, to have been a mound known as Amran; now, an irregular mass, 542 yards—that is, nearly the third of a mile, long—on one side; 330, on the other, and 433 broad. Ebers, however, gives the honour to a vast mound, known as the Kasr, or Palace, which rises in an amazing heap of accumulated earth, stretching 2,400 feet, along the bank of the Euphrates, and reaching back from it, to the vast breadth of 1,800 feet. Here, Ebers thinks, stood both the palace and the gardens, and there is, still, at least an imaginary link between them, for, on the north side of this artificial hill, a lonely tamarisk still looks down on the river, a very old and thick-bodied tree, which the Arabs say is the only tree that remains of the hanging gardens of Semiramis.[2] Such an amazing creation must have led to many less ambitious copies, by some of the immensely rich nobles of Babylonia, and to this, perhaps, we owe the discovery, by Layard, of a bas-relief shewing a garden raised on great pillars, which may, in a feeble way, give a conception of part, at least, of Nebuchadnezzar's wondrous love-gift to his well-beloved. But, however built, or on what particular spot, the great garden of Nebuchadnezzar was certainly inside the pleasure grounds of his palace, nor is it without significance, in an attempt to realize the possibility of such an amazing structure, to find the king himself telling us,

[1] For notices of these gardens, see Ebers, *Ægy. Königstochter*, vol. i. p. 121; vol. ii p. 250.

[2] Duncker, *Gesch. d. Alterthums*, i. 572. *Nineveh and Babylon*, 223.

in one of the inscriptions, that the wall enclosing the palace and its parks was built in fifteen days. With such command of forced labour, anything was possible.

But the most amazing of all the wonders of Babylon was the great temple of Merodach and the Sun, the two being, at first, regarded as the same god. No religious structure, of ancient or modern times, has ever rivalled the grandeur of this primeval sanctuary, which rose like a mountain from the level of the country round. In its treasuries the spoils of the temple of Jerusalem, and much besides, had been laid up by Nebuchadnezzar, as an offering of gratitude to his chief god, for victory over his enemies. He little thought that he was unconsciously preserving the sacred vessels of Israel in a safe and inviolable stronghold, till the day when Jehovah would bring about their restoration to His people.

This vast structure seems to have been a square pyramid of over six hundred feet high, and as long on each side, at its base—or two hundred feet higher than the cross on St. Paul's, and a hundred feet longer, each way, than the length of St. Paul's, east and west. Its extreme age is proved by its secret name, Saggatu, or E Saggil, "the high temple," or "the house of the raising of the head"—an old Akkadian word. An inscription of Nebuchadnezzar shews us that he restored it six hundred years before Christ, but it had already been repaired by previous kings, as a venerable relic of antiquity, for it dated from the first dynasty that had made Babylon its capital—that of Khammarugas, no less than twenty-two centuries before Christ.

The ascent was made, we are told, by a winding path round the outside, with a landing place, and seats for resting, about the middle of the way up; while in the upper-

most tower there was a spacious temple with an apartment splendidly furnished, in which stood a couch, and by its side a table of gold, for the accommodation of Nebo, the god to whom the whole was dedicated; but there was no image of the god in it, though a priestess slept in the chamber at night. In the temple, on the lowest step, there was a golden image of Belus on a throne of gold, before a golden table, set on a golden floor; and another golden statue of the god, 24 feet high, stood in the temple enclosure, till Xerxes took both away.

If the measurements thus given by these ancient authorities be correct, the building must have been indeed immense, for the Great Pyramid itself is only 750 feet square at its base, and rises to a height of only 480 feet; whereas this tower, from a square base of over 600 feet, rose 120 feet higher. Its vastness may indeed be gathered from the fact that Alexander the Great employed 10,000 men for two months in removing the rubbish which at his day had fallen from it. Nor is there any good ground for questioning the correctness of the old Greek historian, for the temple was still standing in something like completeness when he was in Babylon, though Xerxes had rifled it of its treasures and dug into it in search of them.

This mighty city Nebuchadnezzar boasted to have virtually created. It was the "great Babylon which he had built."[1] Nor was he without good grounds for the haughty vaunt. Proofs of its substantial truth still abound. The great new palace, he tells us,[2] was entirely built by him, and so also, ancient writers inform us, were the famous "hanging gardens;" and the bricks of the Kasr are all stamped with his name. He relates that he carefully

[1] Dan. iv. 30. [2] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 130, 131.

repaired the old palace, and enlarged and thoroughly renewed the vast ancient reservoir of the city. Inscribed bricks confirm his own statement that he, in effect, rebuilt the great temple of Bel,[1] and he names eight other temples which he either built or restored. But his greatest work was the reconstruction of the gigantic walls of the city, which were in ruins when he ascended the throne. "Imgur-Bel and Nimiti-Bel, the great double wall of Babylon," says he, "I built. I completed buttresses, to embank its moat, and I made two long embankments of brick and cement along the sides of the river, joining them with the one made by my father. I strengthened the city, and built the wall on the west side of the river, with brick."[2] "I raised the walls of the fortress of Babylon, its defence in war, and skilfully strengthened the circuit of the city."

Nor was Nebuchadnezzar's amazing energy, as the restorer of Babylon, confined to the city. He excavated two broad and deep canals, one of them uniting the Tigris with the Euphrates, and threw a great bridge over the latter, to connect the two halves of the city. At Sippara he dug a huge reservoir, said to have been a hundred and forty miles in circumference and a hundred and eighty feet deep, providing flood-gates by which its waters might be drawn off at will for irrigation. A great canal, of which traces are still visible, was dug by him from Hit, on the Euphrates, to the Persian Gulf, a distance of 400 miles, and quays and breakwaters rose at its mouth, at his command, to receive the commerce of distant lands. A city was founded by him on the coast, to repel the Arabs. At Borsippa, besides building five other temples, he restored the temple of Nebo—identified by some with the Tower of

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 119. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 125.

Babel—and now the mightiest ruin in Mesopotamia. Bricks bearing his name are found over the whole country; at least a hundred sites in the district immediately round Babylon thus shewing that they owed their chief glory to him. Indeed, nine-tenths of the bricks brought from Mesopotamia bear his name. The creator of



A Grove of Palms.

the later empire of Babylon, he was also the author of its architectural splendour. He must be regarded as the greatest builder of ancient or modern times.[1]

In the magnificence of Babylon and its palaces Daniel and his companions passed their days—amidst lofty pyramid temples reflecting every colour from their ascending stages; houses, far and near, painted in bright tints at the pleasure of their owners, surrounded by groves of gigantic

[1] Rawlinson's *Anc. Monarchies*, vol. iii. p. 489; Pusey's *Daniel*, p. 119.

palms and many other trees; the soft green of open parks, and the verdure of gardens. Outside the walls, countless silvery canals, shaded with trees, threaded the landscape amidst broad plains waving with corn, or teeming with the richness of varied crops.[1]

The pomp and splendour of such a city and such a monarchy must have amazed the Hebrew exiles. We know from the prophets the wealth of its commerce, which implies the luxury and magnificence of its merchant princes. Its "chariots like whirlwinds," its "horses swifter than eagles," its horsemen and charioteers, its infantry, with spear and helmet and shining armour, made its army the finest in the world. At Nebuchadnezzar's receptions Daniel must often have gazed with wonder on the state and glory of the crowd of satraps, captains, pachas, chief judges, treasurers, counsellors, and rulers of provinces,[2] in gorgeous uniforms and magnificent robes—worthy of the greatness of the State they served.

As became so mighty a capital, the science of the day found its headquarters in Babylon. Of this, magic and divination formed a prominent feature, and engrossed the studies of a special body of scholars. Hundreds of tablets yet remain, shewing the exorcisms, charms, talismans, and astrological forms in vogue. Observatories crowned the summits of most of the pyramid temples, and reports from them, regularly sent to court, were supposed to enable the initiated to predict the future, in nature, politics, and private life.[3] Various orders of these religio-scientific dignitaries are mentioned in the Book of Daniel—the *chartumim*, who were perhaps the sacred scribes, and seem

[1] For a fine description of the Babylonian landscape, see Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 2.

[2] Dan. iii. 3, 27.

[3] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 153-157, 158-161.

to have been also interpreters of omens,[1] or "revealers of secret things;"[2] the *ashaphim*, or mutterers of magic spells;[3] the *mechsaphim*,[4] mutterers of other kinds of spells—men, apparently professing to have power with evil spirits; the *Chasdim* or "Chaldæans,"[5] who were the astrologers or interpreters of the bearing of the stars on human affairs, Chaldæa being the fatherland of the science;[6] the *Hakamim*,[7] or "magi," or "wise men," including, apparently, all the preceding classes; and the *gazerim*[8]—perhaps another name for the astrologers, since the word means the casting of horoscopes, and reading the supposed influence of the stars and planets on the fate of individuals and kingdoms. The "wisdom" of these classes was the boast of Babylonia. It was in such studies that Daniel, after his palace-education, on being brought before Nebuchadnezzar, himself an adept in all these matters, was found better skilled than any member of the various orders.[9]

Examples of the importance attached to dreams, in antiquity, have frequently come before us in earlier volumes, and will naturally occur to every student of Scripture. That of Assurbanipal,[10] of Assyria, quoted[11] from his

[1] Ebers, *Æg. u. d. Bücher Mosis*, p. 341.

[2] Harkary, in *Journ. Asiat.*, 1870, p. 168. Chartumim (magicians), Dan. i. 20, seems to be a Hebrew word, from Cheret, a stylus, or ancient pen.

[3] In Syriac it is applied to those who charm scorpions and serpents by whispering. It is a Hebrew and also a Chaldæan word. It is rendered "astrologers," Dan. i. 20. The gate of the temple of Bel was called Bab Assaput—"the gate of the oracle," and there was a chamber in the temple called Bit Assaput, "the house of the oracle." Lenormant, *La Divination*, pp. 133–4.

[4] Dan. ii. 2. "Sorcerers."

[5] Dan. ii. 2.

[6] Gesenius, *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 349. Egypt may perhaps dispute the honour

[7] Dan. ii. 14.

[8] Dan. ii. 27. "Soothsayers."

[9] Dan. i. 20. On the *religious ideas* of the Babylonians, see vol. i. pp. 251, 257.

[10] For the importance of dreams among the Egyptians, see vol. i. pp. 440, ff.; among the Assyrians, vol. v. p. 83.

[11] Vol. v. p. 83.

inscriptions, shews the profound agitation into which even the most powerful minds were cast, in those ages, from such phenomena of sleep, so little regarded in our own day. It is therefore strictly in keeping with what might be expected, to read of similar alarm and anxiety having been caused to Nebuchadnezzar by such a visitation. In the second, or, according to some readings, the twelfth year of his reign,[1] the sleep of the Great King, we are told, was troubled by a dream, all recollection of which had fled when he awoke. The whole staff of diviners, astrologers, and magi, were summoned forthwith to the palace, that by spells and conjurations one class of them might force the evil spirits, who had snatched the vision from the king's brain, to give it back, while another should move the beneficent spirits of the sky to reveal it to them by magic arts, or by the signs of the stars and planets.[2] In every detail the narrative is true to the picture of Babylonian life disclosed by the clay literature of the times. The name of Arioch, the "captain of the king's guard,"[3] is the Babylonian Iri Aku, "the servant of the moon god."[4] His office of carrying out the sentences pronounced by the king, is in exact accordance with the duties of his position as captain of the royal body-guard,[5] and the punishment of being cut in pieces and having their houses levelled, which was the penalty of not recalling the dream, is thoroughly Babylonian. Sennacherib, indeed, had thus treated a whole city, on taking it, after the great rebellion.[6]

[1] Dan. ii. 1.

[2] In Dan. ii. 4, read "The Chaldæans answered the king, (Aramæan)," that is—"here Aramæan or Chaldee begins." They answer in their own language. Some copyist has inserted the word "Aramæan," translated "Syriac" in A.V.

[3] Dan. ii. 14.

[4] Gen. xiv. 1. Schrader, *Keilinsch.*, 2te Aufg., p. 430.

[5] Jer. lii. 15; xxxix. 9, 11. 2 Kings xxv. 8.

[6] See vol. iv. p. 491.

In contrast to the Medes, whose king had to consult with his nobles, and was compelled to act in some cases against his will, in obedience to the law "which altered not,"[1] the kings of Babylon were absolute in the fullest sense of the word. No law restrained them. As in Turkey at the present day, their highest dignitaries were mere slaves, elevated at the will of their master, and dependent on his passing caprice. The chief eunuch, one of the highest officials, is rightly described in Daniel as fearing lest "his head might be endangered" by the smallest deviation from his master's will.[2] Every one in the State, whatever his rank, held his position and life only at the will of the monarch. "Whom the Great King would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down."[3] His rank was that of a son of the gods, before whom all men were as nothing. "Merodach," says Nebuchadnezzar, "created me in my mother's womb."[4] King Khammurabi claimed to be the son of Merodach and Ri,[5] and had his name inscribed, during his lifetime, along with that of the gods, the people swearing by his name as a divine being.[6] Nor was it different with other Babylonian or Assyrian kings.[7] Acquaintance so minute with the ideas prevalent in Babylon, as to the importance attached to dreams, their professed interpretation by the rules of astrology and magic, the different classes of "wise men," the high rank they held in the State, the punishments inflicted at the royal will, and even with the Babylonian proper names of the period,

[1] Dan. vi. 14–17.
[2] Dan. i. 10. See, on a later page, the fear of Nehemiah before his Persian master.
[3] Dan. v. 19.
[4] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 113.
[5] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 8.
[6] *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 109.
[7] *Speaker's Commentary* on Dan. vi. 7.

are silent witnesses to the truthfulness of the book in which they are found. Such petty details and exact local colouring imply a contemporary authorship of, at least, parts, of our version of "Daniel."

The "great image" seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream[1] is no less strictly Babylonian. Colossal forms, human and bestial, met the eye on all sides in the capital, at the palace gates, in the courts of the temples, and elsewhere, and might easily be woven into the texture of a dream. Statues were brought, as a special object of plunder, from conquered cities, and set up in the metropolis of the victor. Thus, Assurbanipal records that in one campaign he brought away thirty-two statues of kings, in silver, gold, bronze, and alabaster, and others of the gods.[2] The gold, silver, bronze, and iron of Nebuchadnezzar's image were thus familiar for such uses, and the excavations attest that statues in baked clay abounded.

That a forgotten dream should have been recalled by Daniel, and interpreted with such evident wisdom, filled the mind of the Great King with awe. He felt that the Jewish captive was the mouthpiece of a Power greater than his own, and therefore more than human. Himself skilled in the superstitious arts of his day,[3] he saw that they had utterly failed, where Daniel stood triumphant. Such a result implied the direct aid of a God mightier than those invoked by the Babylonians, and the Divine honours supremely due to a Being so transcendent demanded that the highest respect should be shewn to His representative. The scene at the gate of Lystra, where the crowd, under similar excitement, wished to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, was anticipated in the gorgeous halls of the Great

[1] Dan. ii. 31. [2] Smith's *Assurbanipal*, pp. 227-230. [3] Dan. i. 20.

King. Falling down on his face, Nebuchadnezzar paid Daniel the lowly reverence due to a messenger of the Highest God, while the priests, at his order, poured out a drink-offering at his feet, and burned incense before him.[1] To raise him to lofty dignity followed. Such a man was clearly the most illustrious of the sacred orders of Babylon; he should henceforth bear rank as such, and take precedence in the metropolitan province, which included Babylon and the district round. But Daniel, always generous and faithful, shrank from such an exaltation, until he had secured that of his three companions also, to posts of dignity; the special honour, however, being granted to him alone, of apartments in the royal palace.[2] Four, at least, of the Hebrew captives were thus advanced within the charmed circle [3] where they could most efficiently serve the interests of their race.

The incident of the golden image set up by the Great King [4] is illustrated in many of its details by the inscriptions, or from hints of ancient authors.

Colossal statues of gold were familiar to the Babylonians. The description given, by Diodorus of Sicily, of the three which, till it was plundered by Xerxes, crowned the great Temple of Bel, displaying to all, far and near, the figures of the three great gods of the city, shews that, if they were solid, they contained, with the altars and other accessories before them, a mass of the precious metal, equal in value

[1] Dan. ii. 46.

[2] Dan. ii. 49. The words "sat in the gate of the king," are equivalent to having quarters in the palace, as the gate stands for the whole building. Esther ii. 19, 21; iii. 2, etc.

[3] The word used is, that he made them *shallits*, an official title used in the inscriptions. It is the diminutive of *Sultan*, which is derived from the same verb. It occurs in Dan. ii. 15; v. 29. Ezra iv. 20. Dan. ii. 48.

[4] Dan. iii.

to £17,225,000 of our money.[1] Moreover, in the temple at Borsippa, till the time of Xerxes, there was, according to Herodotus,[2] who visited Babylon soon after, a statue of solid gold 18 feet high. There is, further, in the British Museum, a tablet containing a charge laid before the king, against two high officials, of having made away with seven talents of pure gold,[3] destined to form a statue of himself and his mother.[4] The very robes of gold presented, apparently by Assurbanipal, to the great idols, Merodach and Zirpanit, in the pyramid temple of Babylon, weighed, as we learn from an inscription, four talents, which was equal to £14,500, and were, besides, enriched with precious stones.[5] The amount of gold carried off by Nebuchadnezzar as the spoil of all Western Asia, exceeds imagination, if it were not confirmed by trustworthy documents. One of his inscriptions informs us that he plated an altar placed before the Temple of Bel, with pure gold, of immense weight, and lined all the interior of the sanctuary, at the top of the highest stage or terrace of the temple, "with beaten gold, shining like the rising and setting sun."[6] A statue of one of the Assyrian kings,[7] and others of Nebo and Istar, were found at Nimroud,[8] so that Nebuchadnezzar's golden image was strictly in keeping with the fashion of the time, while the gigantic size affected in this case harmonized with his other creations at Babylon.

Such sacred images were inaugurated with extraordinary solemnities, the statue being borne along with all rever-

[1] Diod. Sic., ii. 9.
[2] Herod., i. 181.
[3] The value of this weight of gold would be over £25,000.
[4] Lenormant, *Choix de Textes*, fasc. 4.
[5] *West. Asiat. Ins.*, ii. 38, 3.
[6] *Ibid.*, i. 53, 58.
[7] Now in the British Museum. See Layard, *Nineveh and its Remains*, vol. ii. p 51.
[8] Rawlinson's *Anct. Mon.*, vol. i. pp. 141, 341.

ence, in a procession of the notables and sacred orders, amidst the loud celebrations and rejoicings[1] of a great public festival. Shalmaneser, who was contemporary, as king of Assyria, with Ahab and Jehu, and also Samai-Rimmon, his son, had erected statues of their "magnified royalty" at Nineveh,[2] and, as a still mightier sultan, Nebuchadnezzar might well go beyond them. He therefore ordered a huge image, presumably in wood, perhaps of himself, perhaps of his chief god, Merodach,[3] overlaid entirely with plates of gold,[4] to be erected in the Plain of Dura, a spot near Babylon, still retaining the same name. It lies about five miles from the great city,[5] on the south-east, in a district marked by the dry channels of various ancient canals, once spreading fertility on every side. One bears the name of Nahr Dura—"the stream of the walls"—perhaps from its connection with the great moats round the fortifications. It leads to a series of mounds extending for the distance of a league. These, as a whole, are called the Mounds of Dura; the ancient watercourses ending at their feet. One of them, now named Mokhattat—"the squared mound"—faces the four cardinal points, and rises to the height of nearly twenty feet; each side, at the base, being almost exactly fifty-six feet long. On the top of this, Oppert found four blocks of bricks, formerly a united whole. "On seeing this mound," says he, "one is instantly struck with its resemblance to the pedestal of a colossal statue,

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 117.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 17. Norris, *Ass. Dict.*, vol. ii. p. 345. Oppert, *Gram. Assyr.*, p. 120.

[3] Lenormant, *Divination*, p. 183.

[4] The great image of Bel is said, in "Bel and the Dragon," to have been of clay within and brass outside. Bel, etc., ver. 7.

[5] Oppert places it outside the city. The *Speaker's Com.* supposes it was within the city. But the houses would hide a wide view of it there. Besides, Oppert was on the spot.

and everything leads to the conclusion that it is the base of that of which the Book of Daniel speaks." [1]

The monument as a whole, including, we may suppose, the platform from which it rose, towered to a height of ninety feet,[2] with a breadth, in some parts, of nine, which would seem to indicate that the image was seated rather than erect, like some of the colossal forms which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in Egypt, or as one still sees, in the "Vocal Memnon" and its companion, near Thebes. Such a figure would be visible at a great distance, for the dip of the horizon in the level plain of Dura is only fifty-three feet in twelve miles.[3]

The inauguration ceremonies of this huge idol were on a scale magnificent even for Babylon. Runners posted to distant regions, commanding the attendance of the satraps and their deputies, the shallits or petty sultans, the generals,[4] the treasurers, the judges, the lawyers, and all the governors of the provinces. Ere long, the roads throughout the empire, leading to the capital, were thronged by brilliant cavalcades converging on the great centre, and in due time an assembly of surpassing splendour appeared at Dura, to honour the high festival. Religion in antiquity was strictly a matter of state; disloyalty to the gods appointed for public worship being held covert disloyalty to the monarch who commanded homage to be paid them. Hence it was proclaimed that all should prostrate themselves when the outburst of triumphal music announced the proper moment; refusal to do so being threatened

[1] *Expédition en Mésop.*, vol. i. pp. 229, 340. *Journ. of R. Geog. Soc.*, vol. x. p. 93

[2] Taking the cubit at eighteen inches.

[3] Selby's *Trigon. Survey of Mesopotamia*, India Office.

[4] Rendered by some, "magistrates;" by Ewald, "arch-astrologers;" by Mühlau und Volck, "chief judges."

with the terrible punishment of being burnt to death in a fiery furnace. This was the fate reserved for audacious rebels, such as Saulmugina,[1] or blasphemers, like Dimaun, who had cursed the gods under the reign of Assurbanipal. A picture on the palace walls of that monarch, at Kouyundjik, indeed, shews two unfortunate creatures being burnt alive, their tongues having first been pulled out.[2] The narrative of Daniel's companions having been thrown into the burning furnace for refusal to worship the golden image, is thus in strict accordance with Babylonian usages.



A Player on the Egyptian Guitar, Assyria.

That the names of some of the instruments used at the inauguration of the golden idol—the sambūkē, the kitharis, and the psalterion[3]—are Greek, has been regarded as shewing "Daniel" to be of late origin. But while music occupies a small space in the sculptures of the earlier kings, it became a prominent feature in all religious and public ceremonies in Assyria and Babylon, in the beginning of the sixth century before Christ, that is, just before the time of Nebuchadnezzar; and nothing was more natural, when we remember the wide dispersion of the Greeks even at an earlier period, than that foreign instruments should have been familiar on the Euphrates, at this time. Greek regiments had been common in Egypt for generations. Sargon, so long

[1] See vol. v. p. 86.

[2] *West. Asiat. Inscr.*, iii. 37, 7.

[3] The sambūkē was a large harp, similar to our own; the kitharis, a lyre, like ours; the psalterion, another variety of the lyre.

before as the days of Isaiah, knew the Ionians, or Greeks. Sennacherib had invaded Cilicia. Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal came in contact with the race in Phœnicia, and both kings had Greek chiefs of Cyprus as their tributaries. Foreign instruments, moreover, would be as eagerly sought after then as now; and if we meet Sanscrit words for Indian productions[1] in the Book of Kings, why not Grecian names in Daniel, for importations from the West?

Indeed, the musicians on the late Assyrian sculptures use a variety of instruments,[2] of which many were undoubtedly foreign, like the *kinnor* of Syria, the double flute of Asia Minor,[3] and the seven-stringed cithara, which is certainly a Greek invention.[4] Nor can we forget how captives were forced by their masters to sing and play their native music, as the Psalms so pathetically record in the case of the Jews.[5]

In the narrative of the deliverance of the three Hebrew confessors from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar is represented as saying that he saw a fourth presence, like that of the "Son of God,"[6] but as the article is wanting in the sacred text, it is more correct to read, "a son of the gods." Regarding himself as of Divine descent, he may have used the phrase only in allusion to a royal dignity in the Form, like his own. But another meaning is not improbable, for the word Bar, employed by the Great King, though equivalent to "Son," was also the special name of the God of Fire. It may be, therefore, that he fancied he recognized, in the angel, a form like "Bar, of the gods,"

[1] See vol. iii. p. 425.
[2] See vol. iv. p. 113.
[3] *Five Great Monarchies*, 2d ed., vol. i. pp. 529, 530, 534.
[4] Lenormant, *La Divination*, p. 191.
[5] Ps. cxxxvii.
[6] Dan. iii. 25.

and thought the fire-god himself had appeared on behalf of the sufferers, as a protest against their treatment. The Babylonians burned their dead, perhaps from regard to the health of the living, but, also, to free the soul from the defilement of the body, and thus purify and sublime it. For purposes of cremation, they had perpetually burning furnaces, and into one of these the three Jews were cast.[1]

The mental alienation of Nebuchadnezzar [2] was undoubtedly the form of madness known as lycanthropy,[3] in which the habits of animals are in some form assumed by the insane person. Instances of those afflicted in this way eating grass, leaves, twigs, etc., like the Great King, are familiar to medical men. Nor is it uncommon for the mind to lose its balance in some direction, in one raised so far above all other men as a mighty despot, and so irresponsible. Many of the Cæsars undoubtedly suffered this terrible penalty of solitary greatness, nor are theirs the only instances of the kind in history. That any allusion to such a humiliating calamity should be found recorded in the Babylonian annals, is not however to be expected. It would be carefully guarded from the knowledge of chroniclers, as a palace secret. But that some terrible illness seized Nebuchadnezzar is strangely proved by the recent discovery of a bronze doorstep, presented by him to the great temple of El Saggil, at Borsippa, one of the suburbs or divisions of Babylon. It speaks of his having been afflicted, and of his restoration to health, and may well have been a votive offering to the gods on his recovery from the attack mentioned in Daniel. Nor is this at all inconsistent with his recorded homage to Jehovah.[4] Though

[1] *Bab. and Orient. Record.* i. 17–21.

[2] Dan. iv.

[3] Dr. Pusey has collected many instances of this; *Daniel*, p. 425. Lycanthropy = literally, "the change of a man into a wolf."

[4] Dan. iv. 34, 37.

he honoured the whole of the gods, his inscriptions shew that in a restricted sense he always worshipped one god especially. While he built temples to various divinities, and acknowledged not only the "great gods," but at least thirteen besides, he also speaks constantly of the "chief of the gods," the "King of the gods," and "the God of gods." Merodach is "the Great Lord," "God his maker," the "Lord of all beings," "the Prince of Heaven," "the God of Heaven and Earth," "the Lord of Lords," "the Lord God."[1] He might, therefore, have for the time transferred to Jehovah, perhaps as another name for his own Merodach, the homage hitherto rendered to the Babylonian idol.

With the fourth chapter of Daniel, the Scripture record of Nebuchadnezzar's life closes. He survived his temporary alienation for some years, and died in B.C. 561, the undisputed ruler of his vast empire. Unfortunately, very few cuneiform memorials of his reign have survived; nor are there any annals of his campaigns, like those left by some Assyrian kings. His inscriptions refer mainly to the construction of temples, palaces, and public buildings; but they incidentally throw light on his zeal for the gods, and his pride in being virtually the builder of his mighty capital.

The record of his repairing the Temple of the Seven Lights at Borsippa has already been given,[2] in illustration of the story of the Tower of Babel. Besides this, we have a lengthened statement of his building or restoring various temples, at an immense cost, and of his raising the walls, digging the moats, and otherwise strengthening the de-

[1] See *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 111, ff.; vol. vii. pp. 69, ff.
[2] Vol. i. p. 220.

fences of Babylon, and a very short notice of his expeditions to Egypt.[1] Fortunately, however, there have come to light a series of commercial tablets, the business records of a great banking house in Babylon, beginning with the first year of his reign, and continuing for the next 117 years, to the thirty-fifth year of King Darius Hystaspis, B.C. 485. Egibi, the founder of the house, seems to have lived in the later years of the reign of Sennacherib; but though this is implied by a single tablet of B.C. 677, the unbroken series begins only in B.C. 604. They are of the greatest value in fixing dates; but, besides this, they incidentally throw light on not a few points of Babylonian life. One records a loan of a few shekels to some needy borrower; another the sale or mortgage of great estates. Every legal precaution is taken in the various documents to prevent fraud and secure the exact fulfilment of covenants, under every contingency. Witnesses duly attest each transaction, and each tablet is duly docketed and labelled, after being registered in the government office at Babylon. While the Hebrews were listening to Ezekiel at Chebar, and Daniel was at his duties or studies in the palace, the clerks and principals of the great banking-house were quietly working at their desks in the city, discounting bills, advancing loans, and negotiating sales and mortgages, as if the business premises of Egibi were the only important spot in the universe!

We must not, however, slight the money-making labours of these Old World bankers and bill-brokers unduly, for, very unintentionally, they have thrown light, in these days of excavation, in their tablets which have been exhumed, on the local surroundings of the Jewish population, in

[1] See p. 199.

Babylonia, during the Exile. They reveal, for instance, that not a few of the general community were, as we should say, middle-class people, in the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ, and we may be sure that a good many Hebrews plied their instinct for money-making, at least as successfully as any other members of the body politic. From one tablet we find that 4,600 sheep were given to one temple in a single year; the owners, however, being allowed to redeem them, if they chose, on payment of certain sums. Herodotus tells us that Babylonia supplied one-third of the corn of the Persian empire, and the Egibi tablets corroborate the high fertility this involves. Thus one tablet gives a single customer credit for ten thousand measures of grain, paid in during the year B.C. 553—the third of King Nabonidus; another credits five hundred measures to a second customer, in one year. In addition to receipts for corn, moreover, we find numbers for deliveries of quantities of barley, dates, fruit of various kinds, and of oils and honey; all these varied riches, including the corn, seeming to have been payment of taxes or dues, the collection of which the Egibis had secured, among other sources of profit. The persons paying them are described as gardeners, farmers, boatmen, scribes, weavers—one being distinguished as "the master of the camels." Receipts to women shew that both sexes had the honour of bearing the burdens of the State. Receipts for quantities of materials of various kinds, for repairing or beautifying the temples, are, also, among the tablets. Thus, in the eighth year of Nabopolassar, B.C. 616, a quantity of wood and stone, for such purposes, is acknowledged; in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar II., B.C. 547, a quantity of wood, furniture, and bricks; in other years, straw and reeds, for

building uses; while in the first year of Cambyses, B.C. 529, we have a memorandum of the receipt of five minæ worth of cedar and cypress wood. Finally, in the reign of Darius, there is an entry of the receipt of fifty-four shekels of gold, a metal not much in circulation then. One of the most interesting features of the tablets is the great care with which the accounts are kept. The names of the payers are entered in full, and sometimes the name of the father and the trade are given. The amount is entered in ruled columns, and separate payments in other columns, the total being given at the foot, and the whole is sometimes countersigned by witnesses.

There is a strange tradition respecting the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.[1] It relates that after he had grown mightier than Hercules, and had undertaken campaigns to Libya and Iberia, and settled part of the subdued nations at Pontus, on the Black Sea, the Great King went up to the roof of his palace, and prophesied, by the inspiration of a god, that the Medes and Persians would, hereafter, bring the Babylonians to slavery, not without guilt on the part of the ruler of the empire. Having uttered these things, Nebuchadnezzar, we are told, suddenly vanished.

[1] From Abydenus in Eusebius, *Præp. Evan.*, ix. 41, b. Ed. Gaisford.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE.

Evil-Merodach .	B.C. 562–560	Pisistratus in Athens	B.C. 560
Nergal-Sharezer .	560–557	Cyrus conquers Media	558
Laborosoarchod .	557	Crœsus reigns in Lydia	558
Nabonidus . . .	554–538	Crœsus overthrown by	
Cyrus occupies Babylon	538	Cyrus	545

The year B.C. 562 was marked by the death of Nebuchadnezzar, at the age of about eighty, after a reign of more than forty-three years. He had created the mighty empire over which he ruled, and it may be said to have died with him; for in less than a quarter of a century the city of Babylon itself yielded to Cyrus without a blow. His son, Evil-Merodach ("Merodach's Man"), succeeded him; but is known as king only through his kindness to Jehoiachin, who had languished in Nebuchadnezzar's dungeons for thirty-seven years. Releasing him after his long durance, he "spoke kindly to him," we are told, and gave him maintenance from the royal table for the rest of his life. Zedekiah was doubtless already dead, else he would, we may suppose, have shared in this good fortune. But the benefactor of the poor Jewish king did not live long to enjoy his high position. Three years after his accession he was murdered by Nergal Sharezer, or Neriglissar, his son-in-law, who seems to have been the "prince" of that name holding a command in the army of Nebuchadnezzar at the

taking of Jerusalem.[1] Like that dignitary, he is styled in the inscriptions "Rubu Emga," or Rab Mag—a title the meaning of which is not known—and it is not probable that two persons of the same name could have held the dignity it represents, under the same king. He had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus had every opportunity for treason. But he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his crime, dying a natural death within less than four years and a half after his accession. A palace built by him has been discovered at Babylon; the only one on the right bank of the Euphrates; his name and titles appearing on the bricks which still remain. His son, who succeeded him, was a mere boy, and was murdered after a brief reign of four months. The throne was then seized by Nabunahid, or Nabonidus, who claimed to be the son of the Rubu Emga, the title given to Nergal Sharezer. He was the last king of Babylon, retaining the sovereignty till overthrown, after seventeen years, by Cyrus. Of his reign the inscriptions furnish us with some notices, which will be given in their place.

The religious life of the Jewish exiles in these years was slowly reawaking, under the influence of their national misfortunes and of the words of the prophets. It is impossible to assign precise dates to many of the Psalms, but some appear to refer so distinctly to the Captivity that we may fitly ascribe them to that period.

The 14th may belong to this class, though some would assign it to the Persian age, when the feeble Jewish colony in Jerusalem was sorely oppressed, both by traitors among themselves, and by their overbearing masters.

[1] Jer. xxxix. 3. Authorities for the chronology: Rüetschi in Herzog, 2te Auf., art. "Nebuchadnezzar;" Sayce, *Fresh Light, etc.*; Riehm, *Calwer Bibellexicon*, *etc.* *Records of the Past*, N. S., vols. i. to v.

"XIV. 1. The fool' says in his heart, 'there is no God.'
They have corrupted themselves, they have done abominable deeds,
There is no one that does what is right.
2. Jehovah looked down from heaven on the sons of men,
To see if there were any that had understanding:
Any who sought after God!
3. All have turned aside; all alike are corrupted:[2]
No one does good, no, not one!
4. 'Are all these workers of iniquity without knowledge,
Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
And do not worship Jehovah?'
5. They trembled in great fear (where no fear was),[3]
For God is in the generation of the righteous.
6. Ye may pour contempt (ye who believe not in God) on the oppressed,
Because he makes Jehovah his refuge! (It matters not!)
7. Oh that the Salvation of Israel would come out of Zion!
When Jehovah turns back the captivity (or 'restores the prosperity') of
His people,'
Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad!"

In the 105th and 106th Psalms the great deeds performed by God in ancient times on behalf of His people seem to be recapitulated, to rouse the exiles to confidence that He would, after all, deliver the nation from their present calamities. Both poems shew a minute acquaintance with the early history of the race, as preserved in the Pentateuch, which must thus have been universally known, and accepted as a sacred record, when they were written. The national idolatry of the past is sternly denounced, and a spirit like that of Phinehas shewn against any approach to it. Israel, it tells us, had sinned in not destroying the heathen nations of Canaan utterly.[4] Failing to do this, its sons had mingled among them and imitated their idolatry.

[1] **Ps. xiv.** [2] Tainted, or sour.
[3] From the duplicate version of the Psalm (liii. 5). The Hebrews were in terror of their heathen oppressors, but without cause, "for," etc.; see next line.
[4] Ps. cvi. 34. Deut. vii. 2. Num. xxxiii. 52. See further, in any Reference Bible.

They had sacrificed to the Shedim, the gods represented in Babylonia, by the colossal bulls and monsters around them.[1] The blood of their sons and daughters had been offered to the idols of Canaan, till God, in His wrath, had given them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. But even in their exile He had remembered them, for His covenant's sake, and "made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captive."

"CVI. 47. Save us, O Jehovah, our God!"[2] concludes the Psalmist, "and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to glory in Thy praise."

Then follows the grand doxology:

"48. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say Amen!
Hallelujah!"

But it is in the 137th Psalm that we meet with the most pathetic memorial of these gloomy days, written after the return of the exiles to their own land; a memorial touching in its sympathy for Israel in its sufferings, but marked by that fierce spirit towards the enemies of the nation which shews the contrast between Judaism and Christianity.

"CXXXVII. 1. By the streams[3] of Babylon, there sat we, and wept,
When we thought upon Zion!
2. We hanged our harps on the willows[4] in the land;[5]

[1] Schrader's *Keilinschrift.*, p. 160. Ps. cvi. 37.
[2] **Ps. cvi. 47, 48.**
[3] The canals of irrigation. **Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 2.**
[4] The weeping willow, to which, from this passage, Linnæus gave the name *Salix Babylonica*, is not found in Babylonia. "The weeping willow is indigenous in China and Japan, cultivated in Europe, but neither indigenous nor cultivated in Babylonia." Koch's *Dendrologie*, vol. ii. p. 507. It may be either the tamarisk or the poplar, to which the Arabs still give the name of *Ereb*, the word used in this Psalm. Stanley' *Lectures*, vol. iii. p. 11. Wetstein, in Delitzsch's *Jes.*, 2te Auf., p. 460, is of this opinion also. Dr. Tristram, however, thinks the willow is intended. *N. H. B.*, p. 414.
[5] Ewald.

"3. For there our oppressors demanded from us the music of our songs,
Our slave-drivers required us to make mirth for them.
(Ordering us to) 'Sing (to them) the songs of Zion'!

"4. How could we sing the songs of Jehovah in a strange land?

"5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget (its cunning);
6. Let my tongue cleave to my palate
If I do not remember thee;
If I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy!

"7. Remember, O Jehovah, to the sons of Edom, the day (of the fall) of Jerusalem;[2]
How they cried, 'Raze it, raze it to its foundations!'

"8. O daughter of Babylon, thou oppressor,
Joy to him who repays thee what thou hast done to us!
9. Joy to him who takes thy children and dashes them against the stones!"

The book of Daniel, as it now is, falls, naturally, into two parts; the first six chapters being devoted to historical narrative; the following six to prophetic visions. These, moreover, are presented in an apocalyptic form, which has its faint prototype in some of the chapters of Ezekiel,[3] and, even earlier, in the use of the cabalistic name Sheshach for Babylon, by Jeremiah,[4] and that of Jareb for the king of Assyria, by Hosea.[5] In Daniel, however, this cryptic style is elaborated to a much greater extent; virtually introducing a new form of composition, which continued to be much used by the Jews in their religious writings, even as late as the middle ages. A close examination of the visions thus distinguishing this Book, has led even such conservative critics as Delitzsch to assign a laet date to it, in its present state. Even the Jews, indeed, do not place

[1] Ps. cxxxvii. 3–9.
[2] Obad. xi. 12. Jer. xlix. 7–22. Lam. iv. 21, 22. Ezek. xxv. 8–14. Zech. i. 15.
[3] Ezek., chapters i., x., xvii., xxviii. [4] Jer. li. 41. [5] Hos. v. 13; x. 6

it among the other prophets, but in the third division of the sacred books, which shews that it was not known when the prophetical books were collected. Nor is there any mention of it even by the Son of Sirach, in his list of the famous men of God in the past,[1] though he wrote as late as the beginning of the second century before Christ. The Hebrew, moreover, is of a very late type, for it is not even that of the Exile, and whole sections are written in the Jewish-Syrian of the age just before our Lord. The visions relate to the Chaldæan, Median, Persian, and Græco-Macedonian periods, with slight allusions to anything beyond. But the earlier monarchies are treated in a very brief and general way, while minute details are given of the oppressions of the Jews by the Ptolemies and the Syrian kings, as late as the first quarter of the second century before Christ. It has, hence, come to be held by scholars generally, that, as we have it, Daniel is a memorial of the literature composed to stir up the enthusiasm of the Hebrew population, to strike for independence, which, as we know, they did in a grand way, in the Maccabean struggle. As if the altered circumstances of the times had influenced the form of revelation, the seer no longer conveys the messages of God to His people by ordinary discourse, but by a series of visions in which angels take the place of "the word of Jehovah." He is no more a preacher to his contemporaries, but discloses to them the future history of the kingdom of God. Ezekiel, as we have said, had already introduced this apocalyptic feature, but Daniel confines himself to it; and it is a curious question how far the mind of both may have been influenced in the mystical style of their visions by earlier

[1] Ecclus. xlix.

writings, more or less similar in character. Zoroaster, the great reformer of the ancient Persian religion, had ended his course before that of the Jewish prophet began, and his writings and sayings may readily have spread from Persia to the neighbouring Babylon. Local influences, as we have seen, affected the inspired writers as they do others, and it is, thus, noteworthy to find in Zoroaster such a passage as the following:

"Zertuscht[1] having asked Ormuzd for immortality, was shewn by him the Omniscient Wisdom. He saw a tree with such a root that four trees had sprung from it,—a golden, a silver, a steel, and an iron one. Then said Zertuscht: 'Lord, thou ruler of the dignities of earth and heaven, I have seen the root of a tree from which four trees have sprung.' And Ormuzd replied to the holy Zertuscht: 'The root of this one tree thou hast seen is the world; and the four trees that have sprung from it are the four times that are to come;—the golden, when I and thou are at one, and Kstaçp-shah receives the law, and the body of the Devs is broken in pieces and they hide themselves; the silver is the reign of the royal Artaschir; the steel, the reign of Anosherevan-Khosru, son of Kobat; the iron, the evil rule of the Devs.'"[2]

The similarity between this and the visions of Daniel is apparent; and it can be no irreverence to trace the influence of such a form of composition on that of the sacred writer. Designing to foreshadow the development of the kingdom of God, he adopts a style already familiar to his brethren in their new home, and so suited to the popular taste that his Book became the first of a long series of writ-

[1] The modern name for Zoroaster.

[2] MS. of Prof. Spiegel. From the *Bahman Jescht*. Herzog, 2te Auf., vol. iii. p. 472.

ings of a similar type. The Book of Esdras, the Book of Enoch, the Jewish Sibyllines, and other books of the same class, followed the model thus set, and formed the last link between ancient prophecy and the fulness of revelation under Jesus Christ.[1]

But it was not to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel only, or to the apocalyptic visions of Daniel, or to the writings of the prophets of past generations, that Israel owed the amazing religious revival which marked the later years of the Captivity, and permanently revolutionized the national character.

The high position and personal dignity of Daniel must have spread his name very early amongst the exiles, for we find him, in B.C. 592, fourteen years after his deportation from Jerusalem, classed by Ezekiel with Noah and Job, for his righteousness, and five years later spoken of by the same prophet, as the wisest of the wise, in all that concerns the secrets of the future.[2] But though his high position and great name might be a boast and even a protection to his race, his visions of the coming changes of kingdoms bore only indirectly on personal religion. Much of Ezekiel's teaching was equally general, while many of his discourses referred to events of the day, like the fall of Jerusalem, though the whole spirit of his long ministry urged the necessity for national reformation, as a preliminary to the obtaining a return to Canaan. Jeremiah, also, had for

[1] Menant remarks that the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, of the image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay, reads, line by line, like the paraphrase of some cuneiform inscription.

[2] Ezek. xiv. 14; xxviii. 3. It has been thought by some that the Daniel thus mentioned must have been some unknown saint, as the Daniel of our Book came from Judæa, a lad, when Ezekiel was already a man. But his "wisdom" came very early, and may well have made him famous, even while Ezekiel lived. Nor does it seem likely that we should have no allusion in Scripture to the supposed Daniel, if he were worthy, as we see he was, to be classed with Noah and Job.

many years preached the need of hearty repentance and loyalty to Jehovah, and the power of his words increased with the course of years. But, besides these, the portion of Isaiah extending from the fortieth chapter to the end of the Book, rich as it is, beyond any other portion of the Old Testament, in its evangelical tone, must have given a mighty impulse to the movement towards a higher spiritual life. It has been the subject of much controversy whether these chapters were uttered by Isaiah himself, or are the composition of an unknown prophet who lived during the Exile. The actual authorship, however, or even the date, is by no means a vital question, if the inspiration of the writer be admitted.[1] Many books of Scripture, though anonymous, are not the less sacred and canonical, and the second part of Isaiah would not suffer in either respect, even if another prophet had written the first section. The writer of the second part speaks, indeed, as if in the midst of the exiles; but this is of so little weight that Ewald assumes him to have lived in Egypt, as one of the fugitives who fled thither with Jeremiah after the murder of Gedaliah.[2]

Nor are the arguments based on philological grounds more conclusive. The vocabulary of the second half shews striking resemblances to that of the first, and of the earlier prophets, and reveals equally marked differences from that of the later. While 848 words of the second part are found in the first, only 735 of these occur in the exile-prophet Ezekiel, though his prophecy is about twice as long. There are eight words found in both parts of Isaiah and nowhere else, but there is only one that is peculiar to the

[1] Delitzsch, *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 138.

[2] Seinecke thinks he lived in Jerusalem; Duhm, that he did not live in Babylon. *Theol. d. Proph.*, 1875, p. 283.

second part and the period of the Exile. A close comparison of the allusions in both sections, to the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, shews that the ideas and local colouring are closely alike throughout, and that in both parts they do not correspond with the scenery of Babylon or the environments of one living there.[1] The force of the argument resting on the rare words common to both divisions may be illustrated by an example. There are two Hebrew nouns, *hor* and *hur*, from the root "to be white," meaning *white linen*. The same words are also formed from an entirely different root, "to hollow out," and mean, in this case, *a hole*. The first part of Isaiah uses *hor* for white linen, and *hur* for hole, but the later writers reverse this. The second part uses only *hur*, but employs it in the sense of *hole*, thus differing from later writers, and agreeing with the first part. Indeed, this is one of the eight words occurring only in the two parts of Isaiah. In the same way, the word *purah*, "a wine-press," occurs only once in the second part, and once in Haggai, a prophet of the period after the Exile. But as the word comes from the verb *to bruise*, it must originally have meant the upper part of the wine-press, and it is used in this sense in Isaiah, while Haggai uses it, as was natural in a late writer, for the lower part of the wine-press, into which the juice flows.

Such arguments may seem minute, but they are so much the more forcible. Wholly undesigned coincidences and the silent testimony of language may well be set against theoretical objections, or fancied diversities of style; for no ancient book is safe if critics are to be *à priori* judges.

[1] See *Bib. Sacra*, 1881 and 1882, in which the whole subject is treated in the most masterly way by the Rev. W. H. Cobb, Uxbridge, Mass.

Still, it is well to remember, that the most sober and devout critics have latterly come to a very general agreement, in assigning the second half to a great, unknown prophet of the Captivity; even so reverend a scholar as Professor Driver expressing this as his belief. In coming to this conclusion, he lays special weight on the fact, which is beyond question, that the prophets always speak as contemporaries of those they are addressing, though they often pass from the horizon of the present, to what is still future. They always, however, advance from what is happening around them, to what is yet to be, as we see in Isaiah's address to Ahaz, when he met him at the fuller's field, outside Jerusalem. There is no instance of a sacred writer, taking his stand in the midst of a distant age, and bearing himself as belonging to it, as Isaiah must have done, if he be the author of the second part of the grand Book which bears his name. Nor need we be staggered by the two portions being put together, for, in the centuries that elapsed, before the prophets were finally collected, questions of authorship might easily get confused.

In the first half,[1] then, the prophet always addresses the people of his day, alike when discussing the subjects of the hour, or when he passes from them to more distant interests. In the second half, we are transported into the midst of the exiled community of the next century, and hear the sublimest of Hebrew preachers seeking to comfort them in their sorrows, and lead them to sincere repentance. The despair which meets us in some chapters of

[1] On the two sides of this question, see Reuss, *Gesch. d. A. Test.*, pp. 426, ff. Stähelin, in *Studien u. Krit.*, 1830, vol. i.; 1831, vol. iii. Meier, in ditto, 1845, vol. iv. Rüetfschi, in ditto, 1854, vol. ii. Keil's *Einleitung*, p. 236. Naegelsbach's *Jesaia, Einleitung*. Delitzsch's *Jesaia*, pp. 383, ff., etc., etc. Cheyne, in his *Origin of the Psalter*.

Ezekiel,[1] had settled on them like a thick cloud, and still darkened the heavens.[2] Israel seemed forsaken by Jehovah, its ways appeared to be hidden from Him, and judgment against its oppressors to have been forgotten. But the prophet knows how deeply this feeling wrongs both themselves and Jehovah. After contrasting Jehovah[3] with the idols, and Israel with the heathen, he describes, almost like a fifth Evangelist, the redemption to be brought by the "Servant of Jehovah" and His subsequent exaltation.[4] The true Israel and the false are then contrasted, the sins of the unworthy denounced, and the souls of the faithful cheered by a vision of future national glory. The truly righteous alone are comforted. It is twice repeated, that "there is no peace from Jehovah to the wicked,"[5] whose awful fate, if they remain impenitent, is proclaimed in the final words—"their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched."

This great inspired lyric opens by a command from Jehovah to the prophets[6] of the day, to comfort His people in their despondency. Deliverance, often promised, was still delayed. Jehovah had apparently forsaken them, and this well-nigh cast them into despair. To cheer away their sadness, they are reminded of the unchanging love borne towards them by God.

"XL. 1. Comfort ye,[7] (O ye prophets), comfort ye My people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye to the (mourning) heart of Jerusalem, and cry aloud to her (that) the time of her affliction[8] is completed,[9] that (the

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 10; xxxvii. 11. [2] Isa. xl. 27; xlix. 14. [3] Isa. xl.–xlviii.
[4] Isa. xlix.-lvii. [5] Isa. xlviii. 22; lvii. 21.
[6] There were many prophets. Isa. lii. 8. Jer. xxix. 1. [7] **Isa. xl. 1, 2.**
[8] Literally, "service of war," including all the misery, hardness, and suffering of a soldier's life in the field (Job vii. 1. 10; xvii. 14). The Septuagint has caught the meaning well, rendering the word "humiliation."
[9] The figure is from a soldier's time of service being ended. Hosea had called

penalty of) her guilt is paid off,[1] that she has received of the hand of Jehovah full punishment[2] for all her sins."

While the prophet, awestruck, listens to this voice from above, a second is heard announcing that preparations for the deliverance of Israel are already begun. Jehovah, Himself, will go at their head and lead them forth from captivity; a highway being first made ready across the desert, as before great princes,[3] alike to do Him honour and to aid the march of the ransomed host.

"3. Hark! one is calling! 'Prepare ye in the wilderness a way for Jehovah; level ye a road through the desert for our God!'[4] 4. Let every hollow[5] be filled up, and every mountain and hill made level,

Israel in God's name, "Lo-ammi," "not My people;" they now are once more "My people" (Hos. i. 9).

[1] Jer. l. 20. Literally, "satisfied."

[2] Literally, "double." Jer. xvii. 18. See vol. v. p. 280. Gesenius, Ewald, and some others, understand "double compensation," but this is not so suitable.

[3] Arrian, *Exped. Alex.*, iv. 30. Diod. Sic., ii. 13.

[4] As every Eastern traveller has learned, roads, in our sense of the term, are unknown. True, we have the phrase corresponding to the English "the Queen's highway" (*el-derb sultani*), "the sultan's road," but it is a mere track. The feet of camels and horses are the only road-makers in the East; and generation after generation walks round the same boulder, makes a circuit round the same hollow, no man ever dreaming of cutting, levelling, banking-up, or draining a road, although the remains of the paved and levelled highways of those master engineers, the Romans, may be seen at every turn. But let a sultan or a shah propose a royal progress, and then all is changed. Pioneers are hurriedly sent forward along the whole route; the neighbouring population is at once impressed, and compelled to work without pay; the stones are gathered out, the dry watercourses are filled in, the rocks are scarped, the sides of the hills are cut, and the track levelled and guarded. No obstacle delays the monarch's advance. I myself have seen the road which was cut and levelled from Jaffa to Jerusalem, to receive the visit of the Prince Imperial of Austria. But it does not last long. The first rain washes all this loose earth away, and the old rocks and watercourses reappear. Then, when the highway is completed, the heralds are sent forth, proclaiming with trumpet and clarion the advent of the great man. For a royal personage there are three sets of heralds: the first, on the day before his arrival; the second, on the morning of the day; the third, which we should call outriders, immediately in front. When the Sultan was about to visit Broussa, in Asia Minor, in 1845, a proclamation was issued, ordering the stones along the route to be gathered out, hollows filled up, and rough places smoothed. It was the same when Ibrahim Pasha visited the Lebanon districts. **Isa. xl. 3, 4.**

[5] Hebrew, "gai."

and the stony places made smooth (as the *Mishor* [1]), and the rough hillocks a plain. 5. Then shall the glory of Jehovah reveal itself, and all flesh shall see it; [2] for the mouth of Jehovah has thus spoken!' "

The mention of the glory of Jehovah suggests the contrast between it and that of man, even when represented by the ruler of a mighty empire like Babylon. He hears the voice that has already spoken, commanding him to cry aloud.

"6. Hark! a voice saying, 'Cry!' And (the prophet) said, 'What shall I cry?' (Say), All flesh is grass and all its glory like the flower of the field. 7. The grass dries up and the flower fades, when the wind of Jehovah blows over it. Verily mankind are but grass! 8. The grass dries up, the flower fades, but the word of our God shall stand for ever." [3]

The prophet next passes in imagination to Palestine, and calls on Jerusalem to announce to the cities of Judah that their God is coming, at the head of the exiles.

"9. Get thee up to the high mountain, O Zion, thou announcer of glad tidings: lift up thy voice mightily, O Jerusalem, thou proclaimer of good news! Lift it up! Be not afraid! Cry to the towns of Judah, 'Behold your God!' 10. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a Mighty One: His (strong) arm will uphold His rule; behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him." [4]

Israel was the flock of Jehovah,[5] for two generations scattered and wretched, but now to be gathered once more into the green pastures of their own land.

"11. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the

[1] See vol. ii. p. 419. [2] Ewald has "His salvation." **Isa. xl. 5-11.**

[3] The Divine promise of the deliverance of Israel from Babylon.

[4] This passage may refer to the ransomed exiles as the reward and recompense of His might, exerted on their behalf.

[5] Ps. lxxvii. 20; lxxx. 1. Jer. xiii. 17; xxxi. 10; l. 19. Ezek. xxxiv. 11-16.

lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom,[1] and gently lead those that are giving suck."[2]

The redemption of Israel from Babylon was, however, so mighty an undertaking, that it might seem impossible. But to this comes the answer, that Jehovah is Almighty. No human counsel was equal to carry it through, but Jehovah is All-Wise. What though the heathen oppose them? Who are they to resist God?

"12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out the heaven with the span, and put the dust of the earth into a measure,[3] and weighed the mountains by a steelyard, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who has directed[4] the Spirit of Jehovah, or,[5] as His counsellor, has taught Him? 14. With whom has He deliberated, that he (whom He thus consulted) might give Him information, and teach Him the right way, and supply Him with knowledge, and shew Him the path of wisdom? 15. Behold, nations are counted by Him as a drop from a bucket, and as a grain of dust on the balance: behold, He lifts up the isles like fine dust,[6] 16. and (the forests of) Lebanon are not sufficient to burn (on His altar), nor its wild beasts for a burnt-offering! 17. All the nations are as nothing before Him—in His eyes they are as things of nought; as if they were only an empty nothing!"[7]

So great is Jehovah. Yet men have worshipped idols which their own hands have made, as similitudes of the Eternal. The rich have idols of gold, the poor of wood,

[1] The strap round the waist makes the upper part of the peasant's ordinary cotton shirt into a great pocket—the depository of everything he values, in turn. Num. xi. 12.

[2] See Gen. xxxiii. 13. Isa. lx. 16; lxvi. 12. See vol. v. p. 347. To drive the flocks too quickly, even for a single day, would kill those that were giving suck. Gesenius. Isa. xl. 11.

[3] A shalish—the third of an ephah, which is given by Josephus as over eight gallons, and by the Rabbis as over four. **Isa. xl. 12–17.**

[4] The same word as "meted out," in ver. 12. The question is equivalent to, Who has contributed help to the wisdom and omnipotence of God?

[5] What man.

[6] "Dak," the word here, may also mean a withered ear of corn.

[7] Literally, "And as emptiness"—the word used, "Tohu," is that applied to the vacancy of chaos before creation began.

but how could either think that their images were like Him who reigns, unseen, in the heavens?

"18. To whom then will ye liken (this great) God,[1] and under what likeness will ye represent Him? 19. The craftsman casts the image, the goldsmith covers it over with plates of gold, and forges silver chains, (to hold it in its niche). 20. The poor man, who can offer little (to his god), chooses a log that is free from wormholes, and then seeks a skilled workman, to set up (from it) an idol which cannot move from its place.

"21. Know ye not? Have ye not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not known from the foundation of the earth? 22. (God is) He who sits throned on the (azure heavens), the circle of the earth—whose inhabitants, (shew far beneath) like grasshoppers; who has stretched out the hollow heavens as a transparent veil,[2] and spread them out as a tent to dwell in; 23. who brings princes[3] to nothing; who makes the judges of the earth as less than nought.[4] 24. They are scarcely planted; they are scarcely sown; scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, when He blows on them and they shrivel up, and the storm-wind sweeps them away like chaff (from the threshing floor).

"25. To whom, then, will ye liken Me that I may resemble him, saith the Holy One? 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold: who has created these things? (It is Jehovah!) He leads out their host in numbered array,[5] and reads out the roll-call of all their names. In awe of His great might and the majesty of His power, not one fails (to answer)."[6]

The long delay in the deliverance from Babylon had sunk Israel in despondency, as if God had forgotten them, or overlooked their interests amidst the cares of His immeasurable empire. But it was utterly wrong and foolish to think so.

"27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from Jehovah: my right has been overlooked by my God?'

[1] **Isa. xl. 18-27.**

[2] Literally, "the finest cloth," through which one can see. The word occurs only once in the Bible. The heavens are the tent cloth over the earth.

[3] Literally, "the heavy" = "the august."

[4] Hebrew, Tohu = chaos.

[5] Like soldiers moving abreast in their battalions.

[6] To the roll-call.

28. Dost thou not know,[1] hast thou not heard—the eternal God, Jehovah, is the Creator of the ends of the earth, who faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding? 29. He gives strength to the weary, and renews the powers of the faint. 30. Yea, though even youths may faint and be exhausted, and young men fall down, 31. yet they that trust in Jehovah[2] shall get fresh strength; they will lift up their wings like eagles,[3] they will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint!"

The prophet now passes to another step in his great argument. Present, in spirit, in the times immediately preceding the Return, he describes Jehovah as summoning the heathen nations before Him, to judge between His claims and those of idol-gods, from the predicted career of the appointed deliverer of His people—Cyrus, the Elamite. He had raised him up and made him triumphant, nor could the idols resist his might.

"XLI. 1. Be silent before Me, O islands (and coast of the west),[4] and let the peoples collect their strength anew, (to oppose Me, and defend their gods); let them come near and speak; let us come together, and argue the matter (between Me and their idols). 2. 'Who raised up from the East[5] the man whom the righteousness (of Jehovah) calleth to follow His steps,[6] giving up the nations before him, and making him tread on (the necks of) kings; making them like dust before his sword, and like stubble driven by the wind, before his bow? 3. He pursued them, he marched on safely,[7] by ways which his feet had not trodden before.[8]

"4. 'Who did all this, and carried it out? I who have called (to life) the generations (of men) from the beginning—I, Jehovah, the First, and with the Last—the Everlasting I.'"[9]

[1] Isa. xl. 28-31; xli. 1-4.
[2] Or, wait for.
[3] 2 Sam. i. 23.
[4] Threatened by Cyrus.
[5] Elam was east of Babylon. In ver. 25 Cyrus is said to come from the North, because Media, which also he virtually ruled, was north of Babylon.
[6] This seems to me the best rendering of the clause. Diestel and many others render righteousness as equivalent to victory—and read, "Whom victory meets at every footstep."
[7] Literally, "in peace."
[8] The Assyrian kings often boast of marching over countries never before invaded, or trackless.
[9] Isa. xliv. 6; xlviii. 12.

The terror of all lands, before him whom Jehovah thus sent against them, was overwhelming. Men appealed to their gods, set up new ones, encouraged each other to hope in them—but all in vain. Before Cyrus took Babylon, he had marched in triumph from the heights of the Hindoo Khoosh to the shores of the Grecian Archipelago, humbling nation after nation.[1]

"5. The isles[2] (and coasts) saw and were afraid, the ends of the earth[3] trembled—they draw together and come to each other (to unite and ally themselves against the invader). 6. Every one helps his neighbour and says to his fellow, 'Be strong.'"[4]

Especially is this the case with the makers of idols. They propose to make new gods from whom to ask counsel and obtain protection.

"7. The metal-founder cheers the maker of gold and silver plates, and he that (fits them on the idol, and) smooths them with the hammer, (cheers up the smith) who works at the anvil, saying (of the work, when put together), 'It is beautiful,' and he makes it fast with nails that it may not fall."[5]

Yet, if the heathen had reason to be terrified, Israel need not fear.

"8. But thou, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the sons of Abraham, My friend,[6] 9. thou whom I have brought from the ends of the earth and called from its uttermost parts,[7] and said to thee, Thou art My servant; I have chosen thee and have not cast thee off

[1] Pahle's *Gesch. des Orient. Alterthums*, p. 170.

[2] The word rendered "isles" means also "coasts." **Isa. xli. 5-9.**

[3] The Westlands = Europe.

[4] Herodotus tells us that Egyptians, Thracians, Cypriotes, Arabs, Phœnicians, Greeks, and people of Asia Minor, were united under Crœsus of Lydia, to oppose Cyrus. Herod., i. 28, 69, 70, 77.

[5] This would be the worst of omens.

[6] Literally, "that loved Me."

[7] Either of the call of Abraham from Mesopotamia, or of that of Israel from Egypt, though this is not so suitable, since Egypt was hardly the ends of the earth to the Jew.

(since). 10. Fear not, for I am with thee; look not round (in terror),[1] for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, yea, I will hold thee up with the right hand of My righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that burned with rage against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they who strove with thee will be brought to nought and perish. 12. Thou shalt seek them but shalt not find them; those who contended with thee, and they who fought against thee, shall be brought to nought and utterly destroyed. 13. For I, Jehovah, thy God, hold fast thy right hand; I who say to thee 'Fear not,'—I will help thee."



Threshing Sledge.

Instead of being crushed, Israel will, with God's help, destroy all its foes.

"14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye (feeble) folk of Israel: I will help thee, says Jehovah; thy Redeemer[2] is the Holy One of Israel.

[1] Or for help, Gesenius. **Isa. xli. 10-14.**

[2] Hebrew, Gōēl. Gen. xlviii. 16. Lev. xxv. 25, 26. Num. v. 8; xxxv. 12; xxxv. 19. Ruth iv. 1. Job xix. 25. Ps. xix. 14; lxxviii. 35. Isa. xliii. 14; xliv. 6, 24;

15. Behold, I will make thee a threshing sledge, sharp, new, with (many) cutting-stones (in its roller);[1] thou shalt thresh mountains and crush them small, and make hills[2] as chaff. 16. Thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them; but *thou* shalt exult in Jehovah and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

The misery of the Exile and the joy that is to follow are again painted. Even the desert, which they must cross to regain Canaan, will blossom before them. How much more glorious then will be their own land itself!

"17. The distressed and poor ones—(the flock of Israel coming back from Babylon), seek water (in the desert) and there is none, and their tongue is dried up for thirst! (But) I, Jehovah, will hear them: the God of Israel will not forsake them! 18. I will open streams on the bare hills and springs in the midst of the plains.[3] I will make the wilderness ponds of water,[4] and parched land spring-heads[5] of water. 19. (And to give you shade and fruit on your march), I will make the cedar grow in the wilderness, the acacia, the myrtle,[6] and the olive; I will plant in the desert the cypress, the plane, and the fig tree,[7] 20. that they may both see and acknowledge, and consider and take to heart, that the hand of Jehovah has done this, and that the Holy One of Israel has created it."

xlvii. 4; etc., etc. For the meaning of the word, see vol. iii. p. 24. The idea is, one charged with the task of restoring the rights of another and avenging his wrongs.

[1] See vol. iv. p. 386. Mic. iv. 13. **Isa. xli. 15-20.**

[2] Those who opposed the deliverance of the exiles.

[3] The word is applied in Scripture to "the *Valley* of Jericho," "the Plain of Dura" at Babylon, and "the Plain of Mesopotamia." Jericho did not lie in a *valley*, but on a plain, or, rather, a slope.

[4] The Hebrew word (sing.) is used specially of the pools left by the Nile after its inundations. Similar figures are used in Isa. xxx. 25; xxxv. 7; xliv. 3, 4.

[5] The word is from the verb to "go forth."

[6] The Hebrew word, "hadās," the myrtle, occurs elsewhere only Isa. lv. 13, and in post-exilic books, Neh. viii. 15; Zech. i. 8, 10, 11. The name Hadassah, "the myrtle," is found in Esth. ii. 7. But myrtles grew wild in Palestine, and there is no older name used for them, so that no argument for the age of the second part of this Book can be founded on its being the first to refer to the myrtle.

[7] These last two names are uncertain. The one has been rendered "the elm," "the plane," and "the fig;" the other "the elm," "the box," the "Scherbin-cedar" of Lebanon, and "the fig." I choose "fig" as the counterpart of "olive" in the former clause.

The prophet now reverts to the controversy with the idols, proposed by Jehovah in the opening of the chapter. He no longer, however, addresses their worshippers, but speaks to the idols themselves. They are nothing, since they have not foreknown, far less brought about, the great events by which the kingdom of God is to be promoted. Jehovah alone knew these beforehand and caused their realization.



THE PLANE TREE (PLATANUS ORIENTALIS).

"21. 'Bring forward your case (O ye idols),' says Jehovah, 'produce your strong arguments[1] (in your defence),' says the King of Jacob. 22. Yes, let them bring them forward, and tell us what will happen (hereafter)! Let them tell what will happen in the immediate future, that we may note it and watch the issue, or let us hear what lies hidden in times more remote.[2] 23. Reveal what is to happen hereafter, that we may acknowledge you to be gods; do good or do evil—(do something)—that we may at once wonder and behold. 24. Lo, ye are airy nothings,[3] and your works are the same;[4] he is an abomination who chooses you (for his gods)!

"25. I (Jehovah) have raised up one from the north[5] and he is

[1] Literally, "grounds of defence." **Isa. xli. 21–25.**

[2] Or, let them tell the first beginnings of things in the past, or what lies hidden in the future.

[3] Literally, "spring from nothing."

[4] The word as it stands in the Hebrew occurs nowhere else, and is unintelligible. The Vulgate and other versions adopt an emendation, meaning "of nought."

[5] Media.

come; from the rising of the sun [1] he calls on My name! He shall trample on lofty princes as if they were mortar,[2] and as the potter treads the clay. 26. Who foretold this from the beginning, that we might know it? Who announced it beforehand, that we might say He is right? There is no man amongst you who predicted it—no one that revealed it—no one that heard a word from you (on these matters)![3] 27. (I, Jehovah), first said to Zion, 'Behold, behold them,'[4] and gave Jerusalem a bearer of the glad news.[5] 28. But when I look (among your prophets) there is no one among their whole crowd,[6] (who has foretold the future as I have done); there is no counsellor that I may ask through him, and get any answer. 29. Behold, they are all vanity; they can do nothing; their molten images are wind and emptiness!" [7]

[1] Elam—Cyrus united Media, Elam, and Persia under him.
[2] Mortar is made in the East by treading.
[3] Literally, "your words." **Isa. xli. 26-29.**
[4] The things to come, or the returning exiles.
[5] "The first who gave a herald of good to Zion, even to Jerusalem—one who said Behold, behold them" **Ewald.** [6] **Literally, "them."** [7] **Tohu.**

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIFTH GOSPEL.

The second part of Isaiah evidently consists, like the other prophetical writings, of a series of public addresses, or compositions which are parts of a related whole. The great prophet-poet returns again and again to his task of comforting the people of God, not only under the sorrows of exile, but under the deeper trial of an apparently long delay in the appearance of the promised deliverer, who should "restore Israel." He had already spoken of his nation as "the servant of Jehovah,"[1] but he now uses the title in a way incompatible with a merely figurative and collective meaning. Jeremiah and Ezekiel,[2] like him, had applied it to the Chosen People, but in many passages of Isaiah it is associated with striking personal traits which imply some individual reference. It cannot refer to the prophet himself, for the dignity ascribed to the Servant of Jehovah is far above that of any prophet, and implies much that no man could ever perform. Hence even the Targum applies the phrase to the Messiah, thus shewing the sense in which it has been instinctively understood, by the Jews themselves, from the earliest times, and pointing out the only adequate application. The view of the subject taken by Delitzsch and Oehler, seems to me, therefore, substantially correct. The conception of the Servant of

[1] Isa. xli. 8.

[2] Jer. xxx. 10; xlvi. 27, 28. Ezek. xxxvii. 25.

God, we are told, may be compared to a pyramid. The base is Israel as a whole ; above that is Israel in a spiritual sense, and the apex is the person of the mediating Saviour who rose out of Israel.[1] "In its highest application," says Delitzsch, "I regard it as a prefiguration of the suffering and glorified Redeemer, Jesus Christ, our Lord ; as, indeed, many passages of the New Testament directly intimate." In its immediate and direct application, however, it may be fitly regarded as a poetical vision of the glorious services to be rendered by the great deliverer from the Babylonian exile.

"XLII. 1. Behold My servant [2] whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delighteth.[3] I have put My Spirit upon him; My law shall he make known to the nations.[4] 2. He shall not cry nor shout, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; 3. a bruised reed shall he not break off, and a faintly glimmering wick shall he not quench; he shall make known the law according to truth. 4. He will not faint or give way [5] till he has established the Law in the earth, and the nations [6] will (eagerly) look for his teaching." [7]

The Servant of Jehovah is now directly addressed, and the work He is commissioned to do is more minutely defined. Its greatness is to be estimated by the sublimity of the language in which it is introduced.

"5. Thus says God,[8] Jehovah, who created the heavens and stretched them out; who spread out the earth and all that springs from it; who gives health to its population and life to them that walk on it; 6. I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thy hand,

[1] Delitzsch, *Iesaia*, p. 414. Oehler, *Old Test. Theol.*, vol. ii. p. 399.

[2] **Isa. xlii. 1-6.**

[3] Matt. xii. 18; xvii. 5. Phil. ii. 7. Matt. iii. 17; xvii. 5. Eph. i. 6. Isa. v. 1.

[4] "Law," Hebrew, Mishpat. Even Gesenius remarks that the sense in which the word is to be taken is shewn by ver. 4 and chap. li. 4, adding that it means "the law of God, the religion of Jehovah." *Iesaia*, vol. ii. p. 60. Mishpat comes from the root "to judge." [5] Same word as "break off." [6] Literally, "islands."

[7] His "Torah," his teaching of the law of God.

[8] Literally, "The God," the true God, in contrast to idols.

and will keep thee (in My care), and give thee for a covenant of the people,[1] for a light of the nations; 7. to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon, and those that sit in darkness from the prison houses." [2]

To this announcement respecting the Servant of Jehovah, the prophet hastens to add that Jehovah, who has been silent so long, will speedily go forth against the oppressor of His people, and when they are freed, will lead them back to their own land amidst the rejoicings of mankind.

"8. I am Jehovah, that is My name, and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. 9. Behold, the first things (I foretold) are come to pass: [3] I now announce what is new: before it springs forth [4] I tell you of it.

"10. Sing to Jehovah a new song; His praise from the ends of the earth, ye that go down to the sea,[5] and all that sail upon its waters; [6] its coasts and islands, and all that dwell in them. 11. Let the wilderness (pasture land) and its settled villages lift up their voice, and the encampments that Kedar [7] inhabits. Let the inhabitants of the rock city—Sela [8]—shout for joy, let them rejoice aloud from the top of the mountains. 12. Let men give glory to Jehovah, and proclaim His praise in the islands. 13. Jehovah will go forth as a mighty warrior; He will rouse Himself (against the enemies of His people), like a man of (many) wars: He will shout, yea roar (the cry of battle); He will shew Himself a Hero against His foes."

[1] The mediator of a covenant between Jehovah and Israel. See for similar expressions, Isa. xlix. 6; Mal. iv. 2; John xi. 25. The covenant is that promised in Jer. xxxi. 31-34.

[2] Dungeons were, thus, underground, and without light. So it was in the case of Jeremiah—shut up in a subterranean cistern. **Isa. xlii. 7-13.**

[3] The career of Cyrus as world-conqueror, etc.

[4] The figure is from the budding of a tree.

[5] From the hills on which Judah lived.

[6] Literally, "its fulness." Cheyne and others apply the phrase to the fish, but this is quite out of keeping with the context.

[7] Kedar, "living in tents," as distinguished from the towns of the settled Arabs; a contrast still maintained in the East.

[8] Or, Petra.

Jehovah Himself tells us why He will thus make bare His mighty arm.

"14. I have long held My peace,[1] I have been still and restrained Myself. But, now, I will raise the battle-cry, loud as that of a woman in her trouble ; I will, at once, breathe thick (in My fury) and snort (in My burning indignation). 15. I will wither the mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbage (with the fiery breath of My wrath). I will turn streams to dry land (by it), and dry up the pools of water (with its scorching heat). 16. And (having freed My people from the oppressor) I will lead them as one leads the blind, by a way which they knew not : I will bring them by paths they have not known : I will make the night (of the trackless desert) light before them,[2] and rough places smooth (as the *Mishor*[3]). These words I will perform ; I will not fail."

Awed by this, and smitten by the hand of God, the heathen will be kept from impeding the return of His people.

"17. They shall shrink back ; they shall be ashamed that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, 'Ye are our gods.'"

Israel is now addressed. Though thus to be freed by the hand of Jehovah, it had no claim to be so from any merits of its own. Called to be the servant of Jehovah, it had been "unprofitable," and the Captivity, with all its sorrows, had been punishment divinely inflicted for long-continued sin. The same thought is repeated by Ezekiel, in the words, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went."[4] Another "Servant" must take the place of one so deaf and blind to

[1] **Isa. xlii. 14-17.**

[2] Their ignorance of the way was like the darkness of one blind. The desert is often spoken of as dark, in this sense. Isa. xlv. 19. Jer. ii. 6, 31. Job xii. 25 ; xviii. 18 ; xxx. 3.

[3] Vol. ii. p. 419.

[4] Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32, etc.

the voice and wonders of Jehovah as Israel had been, and carry out His work !

"18. Hear, ye deaf,[1] and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19. Who is blind, but (Israel), My servant ? or deaf as he—My messenger whom I sent ? Who is blind as he who was trusted by God ;[2] or as Jehovah's servant ! 20. Thou hast seen much, yet hast not observed it ; thou hast opened thine ears, but hast not paid heed. 21. Jehovah was pleased, for His righteousness' sake, to give (thee) great and glorious teaching of His Law (through the prophets). 22. Yet (instead of the good it should have brought), Israel is (to-day) a people robbed and spoiled ; shut up in dungeons, hid in prisons, a prey, without a deliverer ; a spoil, with no one to say 'give back.' 23. Who among you will listen to this and attend, and give heed for time to come ? 24. Who was it that gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to robbers ? Was it not Jehovah, against whom we have sinned ? in whose ways Israel would not walk, and whose law he would not obey ? 25. It was for this He poured the fury of His anger on him, and the miseries of war. These set him on flames round about, but he did not recognize (God's hand); they burned amidst his sons, yet he laid it not to heart."

Yet Israel, though thus blind and deaf, and to a great extent impenitent, will be redeemed and re-established gloriously, since Jehovah has chosen the nation and loves it.

"XLIII. 1. Yet, now, thus says Jehovah, who created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel ; Fear not, for I will redeem thee,[3] I have called thee by thy name—'My people ;' thou art Mine. 2. When thou passest through the waters, I shall be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ! 3. For I, Jehovah, am thy God ; I, the Holy One of Israel, am thy Saviour. I give Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in thy stead.[4] 4. Because thou art so dear in My sight, so prized,

[1] **Isa. xlii. 18-25 ; xliii. 1-4.** [2] Friend of God. Gesenius. Knobel.

[3] Literally, "I have redeemed thee." The redemption was determined, but not yet carried out.

[4] This prophecy was literally fulfilled. Cambyses carried out the conquest of Egypt which Cyrus had planned, and extended the Persian conquests far and near.

so precious to Me, I will give (less valued) men[1] in thy stead, and peoples for thy life.

"5. Fear not,[2] for I am with thee; I will bring thy sons from the sun-rising and gather thee from the West. 6. I will say to the North, 'Give up;' and to the South, 'Keep not back,' bring My sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth;[3] 7. every one who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed and prepared (for that end)."

The prophet is next addressed.

"8. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes (and do not use them), and the deaf who have ears (but will not hear). (Bring them to an open space, where the controversy between the true God and the idols may be settled before the heathen nations, who also are to assemble there). 9. Ye heathen nations, all of you, assemble, and let the peoples gather together! Who among you (of your prophets), can announce such things, and tell us their predictions delivered in the past (and now proved true)? Let them produce their witnesses, that they may be vindicated, and let these hear and say—It is the truth. 10. Ye (men of Israel) who fear My name, are *My* witnesses, says Jehovah, ye are My servant, whom I have chosen; that ye may acknowledge and believe Me, and understand that I am He, (and that) before Me no God was formed, and after Me there shall be none. 11. I—I, am Jehovah, and besides Me there is no Saviour. 12. I—I (alone) have foretold (what is to happen) and have saved (you), and have revealed beforehand (that I would do so); it was no strange god among you that did this; ye are My witnesses, says Jehovah, that I am, (thus, the only true) God. 13. In the future, also, I am He, and no one can deliver out of My hand. I work and who can hinder Me?"

Seba, "The Men," is said by Josephus to be the ancient kingdom of Meroë, shut in, like an island, by branches of the Nile: and this identification is generally accepted as correct. It thus formed part of the present Nubia, immediately north of Kordofan, Sennaar, and Abyssinia: a position which, in antiquity, lay in the direct caravan-route between Arabia and India on the one hand, and Africa on the other, and brought wealth and prosperity to the country at large, especially to the towns. There are only two notices of Seba in Scripture: the one stating that its people were famous for their stature, and the other speaking of them as strong and brave, "a people terrible from of old," who broke in pieces all who opposed them, and whose land was rich in streams. Herodotus describes them, very similarly, as the tallest and handsomest of men, choosing their king for his stature and strength, and living often to the age of a hundred and twenty.

[1] Jer. xxxii. 20.

[2] **Isa. xliii. 5-13.**

[3] So widely scattered were the Jews even then.

The prophet now introduces a renewed prediction of the destruction of Babylon.

"14. Thus says Jehovah, your Redeemer,[1] the Holy One of Israel: For your sakes have I sent (the foe) to Babylon, and will drive out,[2] (as fugitives), all its (mixed) population, and the Chaldæans (themselves), to the ships, hitherto their pride.[3] 15. I, Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King, (will do it)!"

The deliverance from Egypt is introduced as a pledge for the fulfilment of all this.

"16. Thus says Jehovah, who makes a road through the sea, and a path through the mighty waters: 17. who leads forth (to their doom) chariot and horse, army and power:[4] they lie down together (at His word), they shall not rise; they are extinguished; they are quenched like the wick of a lamp!

[1] Or Gōēl. See p. 306. **Isa. xliii. 14–17.**

[2] Literally, "down," Babylon being figured as a proud and lofty city.

[3] Herodotus, i. 194, describes the vessels of the Babylonians, and the ships of Ur are often mentioned in early inscriptions. See vol. i. p. 248. The merchandise of Arabia was carried to Babylon in ships.—Strabo, xvi. 4. § 18. The later inscriptions shew that numerous vessels were always to be found at the mouth of the Euphrates, and that they constantly sailed over the Persian Gulf. It is uncertain whether they ventured beyond its head-lands, into the open Indian Ocean: but there is reason to believe that by some means or other they obtained Indian commodities, which would come most readily by this sea-route. The teak found in their buildings, the ivory and ebony which they almost certainly used, the cinnamon and the cotton in the large quantities which they consumed, can only have come from the peninsula of Hindustan, and cannot be supposed to have travelled by the circuitous route of Cabul and Bactria. Arabian spices were conveyed by the Gerrhæans, in their ships, to Babylon itself, and it is probable that the rest of the Gulf trade was chiefly in their hands. Perfumes of all kinds, pearls, wood for shipbuilding, walking-sticks, cotton, gems, gold, and Indian fabrics, flowed into the Chaldæan capital from the sea, being mostly brought to it up the Euphrates in ships, and deposited on the quays at the merchants' doors. Æschylus calls the Babylonians who served in the army of Xerxes, "navigators of ships." (Æschyl., *Pers.*, ll. 52–55.) Commercial dealings among the dwellers in the city, on a most extensive scale, are disclosed by the Egibi tablets (*Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. vii. pp. 1–78); "spice merchants" appear among the witnesses to deeds. (*Records of the Past*, vol. xi. p. 94.) Their own records and the accounts of the Greeks are thus in the completest agreement with the prophet when he describes Babylon as "a land of traffick . . . a city of merchants."—Rawlinson, in *Clergyman's Magazine*, 1883, p. 105. See also Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, p. 248.

[4] An allusion to the overthrow of Pharaoh in the Red Sea.

"18. (Yet ye need not) call to mind former things,[1] nor ponder those of the past; 19. behold, I am about to do what is new; it is even now budding forth, lo, ye shall see it! I will make a road through the waste, and streams in the desert. 20. Even the beast of the field will praise Me, the thirsty jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the waste and streams in the desert, for drink to My people, My chosen, 21. the people whom I have formed for Myself; who (also, like these creatures) shall declare My praise, (for such supplies in such a region)."

Once more it is proclaimed that all this is of God's free grace, for the honour of His great name; not for any merit or painful service rendered by Israel.

"22. (I do this) though thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, much less wearied thyself,[2] (in My service,) O Israel. 23. Thou hast not brought Me (in Babylon, as thou didst formerly in Judah) the sheep of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honoured Me with thy other sacrifices, nor have I burdened thee with food-offerings, nor wearied thee with (burning) incense. 24. Thou hast not bought for Me, with silver, the costly fragrant Arabian reed, (for holy oil),[3] and thou hast not sated Me with the fat of thy sacrifices. But thou hast tired Me out[4] with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities!

"25. I, I alone, blot out thy transgressions, for My own sake, and will remember thy sins no longer. 26. (Yet if thou thinkest thou hast anything to urge for thyself) put Me in remembrance (of it); let us try the matter together; state what thou canst, to justify thyself. 27. (But thou canst say nothing, for even) thy first father (Jacob) sinned, and they that mediated[5] (between Me and thee—thy prophets and priests)—have been faithless to Me. 28. For this cause have I dishonoured thy holy princes, (the high priests),[6] and have given over Jacob to ruin,[7] and Israel to reproach."

Notwithstanding all this, Jehovah, for His love's sake,

[1] **Isa. xliii. 18–28.**

[2] The minute and wearisome observances of the ceremonial law—its sacrifices, offerings, and Levitical rites, could not be observed in Babylon.

[3] **Exod. xxx. 23. Jer. vi. 20.**

[4] Literally, "loaded Me like a slave."

[5] Literally, "mediators."

[6] **1 Chron. xxiv. 5. Jer. lii. 24.**

[7] Literally, have "put him under My ban," devoted him to destruction. See vol. ii. p. 447, note.

and for His honour,[1] will blot out the recollection of the sins of His people, and load them with blessing.

"XLIV. 1. Yet now hear,[2] O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen. 2. Thus says Jehovah, thy Creator, that formed thee from the womb, who is thy Helper: Fear not, O Jacob, My servant, and thou, Jesurun,[3] whom I have chosen. 3. For I will pour out water for the thirsty, and streams over the parched land; I will pour out My Spirit on thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring. 4. And they will spring up as grass beside flowing waters,[4] and as poplars by watercourses. 5. One will say, 'I am Jehovah's;' another will joyfully praise the name of Jacob; and a third will make the mark of Jehovah on his hand,[5] and boast of Israel as a name of honour."[6]

The intense hatred of the prophet to the idolatry which had so depraved his nation under Manasseh and Ahaz, and survived only too vigorously even in Babylon,[7] now breaks out again in a vivid contrast of the greatness of Jehovah as compared with the gods of the heathen. There must have been great danger of the Hebrews finally apostatizing from their national faith, to lead to such denunciations of idols. Heathenism surrounds our countrymen in India as much as it did the Jews either in Judæa or on the Chebar, but it would be strange to an Anglo-Indian audience, firm in their belief in one God, if their preachers dwelt on the risk of their becoming idolaters, as the prophets felt necessary in the case of their brethren during the Captivity.

[1] Isa. xliii. 4, 25.

[2] **Isa. xliv. 1-5.**

[3] A diminutive of endearment = "the worthy people."

[4] Vulgate. So, virtually, Septuagint. Rivulets of water are led to the roots of each tree in a palm grove, or in a garden that is well watered.

[5] Slaves bore the name of their master, -soldiers, of their leader,—idolaters, of their god,—branded or tattooed on their forehead or on their hand. So it would be done towards Jehovah by His willing servants. Eichhorn translates the clause, "will imprint on his hand 'Sacred to Jehovah.'"

[6] "Soothingly names the name of Israel." Gesenius. The verb means "to deck with a title," "to call by an honourable name."

[7] See Ezek. *passim.*

Jehovah, we are again told, has long since predicted the deliverance of His people, and will prove His divinity by the fulfilment of His Word, while the idols have foretold or carried out nothing.

"6. Thus says Jehovah,[1] the King of Israel, and his Redeemer,[2] Jehovah of Hosts: I am the First and the Last, and beside Me there is no god. 7. Who foretells[3] as I do, ever since I founded this ancient people—let them shew it and make it plain? and let them, also, reveal the future, and shew (what will come hereafter)."

Israel needs not fear: Jehovah designs good for it.

"8. Fear ye not, neither be alarmed; have not I long since made known to you and declared (what was coming)? Ye are My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? There is no (other) Rock—(no other true god); I know of none."

While Israel can boast in Jehovah, the heathen have only worthless idols to which to look.

"9. The makers of idols are all of them foolish;[4] the things they delight in are worthless! they themselves must confess this,[5] for (these images) neither see nor know, and therefore he is put to shame 10. who makes a god, or casts a molten image, that is good for nothing! 11. Lo, all its worshippers[6] shall be ashamed, for those that make it are only mortals. Let them all assemble and stand up together (to defend their gods); (but, if they do so) they will only tremble and be put to shame together."

The prophet now leads us into an idol manufactory, such as then drove a great trade.

"12. The metal-worker[7] sharpens his chisel: he works with the charcoal[8] (of his forge) and fashions the idol with hammers, and

[1] **Isa. xliv. 6-12.**
[2] Hebrew, Gōēl.
[3] Literally, "calls"—referring to the discourses of the prophets, as in Isa. xl. 2.
[4] Literally, "chaos."
[5] Are their witnesses.
[6] Its fellows. Haberim = associates.
[7] Literally, "a cutter of iron."
[8] See Isa. liv. 16.

finishes it by the strength of his arms; he grows hungry (at his work) and is exhausted; if he does not drink water he grows faint.

"13. The carpenter[1] stretches out his measuring line; marks out the figure of the god with his chalks, works out (the details) with various tools, and measures the proportions with his compasses, to make it like a human figure, so that, like a comely man, it may dwell in some house.[2] 14. He hews down cedars, and takes the ilex and oak; he chooses for himself from among the trees of the wood; he plants a fig tree[3] and the rain nourishes it, 15. and it serves for firing to him, he takes part of it and warms himself; he kindles part and bakes bread with it, and of part he makes a god and worships it: he makes it into an idol and falls down before it! 16. The one half he has partly burnt in the fire, partly used to make flesh ready to eat; he roasts meat with it and satisfies his hunger, and warms himself, and says, 'Aha, I am warm, I have enjoyed the fire.' 17. And the remainder of it he makes into a god, his graven image, and falling down before it, prostrates himself, and prays to it, saying, 'Save me, for thou art my god!'

"18. They have no sense or understanding, for their eyes are shut[4] so that they do not see, and their heart is closed so that they do not understand. 19. And no one considers in his heart or has sense or understanding to say, 'I have burned half of it in the fire, and I have used its coals to bake my bread, and I roasted flesh with it, and ate, and shall I make the other half into an "abomination"? Shall I fall down before a piece of wood grown out of the ground?' 20. He who thus delights in what is worthless[5]—as it were, feeding on ashes—is led astray by his blinded[6] heart, and he cannot free himself from his errors, or save his life, or say, 'Is there not a lie in my right hand?'"

Israel should reflect on these things, and cleave to Jehovah, his gracious God and Saviour.

"21. Think on these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for thou art My servant. I have proved thee, thou art My servant; O Israel, I will not

[1] The prophet has described the making of an idol of metal; he now describes that of a wooden one. **Isa. xliv. 13–21.**

[2] There was a house-god in each family. The Teraphim had a human form, at least in some cases (1 Sam. xix. 13–16), and so had most idols.

[3] Schrader, *K.A.T.*, 2te Auf., p. 411; the same word is "fig" in Assyrian.

[4] Literally, "plastered over," in this case perhaps "closed by fat."

[5] Literally, "to feed" or "feast" on "ashes." [6] Literally, "deceived."

forget thee. 22. I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as the morning mist [1] thy sins; return to Me, for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing out, O ye heavens, for Jehovah has done it! Shout aloud, ye valleys and caves of the earth; break forth into jubilee, ye mountains, thou forest and all thy trees, for Jehovah has redeemed Jacob, and shewn Himself glorious (in His deeds) towards Israel."

The majesty of Jehovah is proclaimed, as Creator of the Universe, and as ruling in the kingdom of Providence, confounding false prophets, confirming the words of His true messengers, and ordaining Cyrus to subdue the heathen, especially the mighty power of Babylon.

"24. Thus says Jehovah, thy Redeemer,[2] He that formed thee from the womb,—I, Jehovah, am He who makes all things, that stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by Myself; 25. that brings to nothing the signs of lying babblers, and makes foolish the soothsayers; that makes 'the wise' draw back ashamed, and turns their pretended wisdom to folly: 26. that makes the word of His servant stand, and fulfils the predictions of His messengers; [3] that says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be once more inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They will be rebuilt, I will restore their ruins;' 27. that says to the depths of the waters, 'Be dried up, I will dry up thy streams;' [4] 28. that says of Cyrus,[5] 'He is My shepherd who will perform all My pleasure,' [6] and of Jerusalem, 'Let her be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'Let thy foundations be laid.'" [7]

"XLV. 1. Thus says Jehovah to His anointed [8] (His Messiah), to Cyrus, whose right hand I hold, that nations may be subdued before

[1] Hos. vi. 4. **Isa. xliv. 22-28.** [2] Hebrew, Gōēl. [3] The prophets.

[4] The Euphrates is here regarded as a sea, as the Nile in other passages. Cyrus is said to have drained off the great river into another channel, so that the waters sank to a foot deep, and his soldiers could go through it on foot. (*But see* p. 396.)

[5] "Cyrus" was formerly thought to mean "the Sun," but it is really identical with the name of the river Kur. On the monuments it is *Kuru*. See Delitzsch, *Jesaia*, 2te Auf., pp. 265, 470.

[6] Or "work."

[7] Josephus says, "Now this became known to Cyrus by his reading the book of his prophecy which Esaias left behind him, for this man said, that God had spoken thus to him in secret: 'My will is that Cyrus,' etc. This was prophesied by Esaias one hundred and forty years before the demolition of the temple. When, therefore, Cyrus had read this, and marvelled at the Divine power, an earnest impulse and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was so written." Jos., *Ant.*, XI. i. 2.

[8] **Isa. xlv. 1.**

him, and that I may ungird the loins of kings,[1] and that open before him the wide double gates (of cities), and that the barriers (of towns) may not be shut (against him), 2. I will go before thee and make the hilly ground smooth; two-leaved gates of brass will I break in pieces, and their bars of iron will I cut in sunder,[2] 3. and I will give thee the treasures concealed in darkness, and the wealth of secret hiding places,[3] that thou mayest know that I, Jehovah, the God of Israel, am He who called thee by thy name. 4. For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel My chosen, (not for thine own sake), have I called thee by thy name; I have given thee the honourable title (of 'My shepherd'), though thou didst not know Me.

"5. I am Jehovah and there is none else; there is no God beside Me; I girded thee (for the victorious performance of My will), though thou didst not know Me, 6. that all men may know, from the rising of the sun even to the west, that there is none beside Me. I am Jehovah, and there is none else, 7. the Former of light and the Creator of darkness; the source of good and the dispenser of trouble (to man); I, Jehovah, am He who does all this.

"8. Drop down (your showers), ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open (her bosom), let salvation blossom forth, and righteousness spring up with it! I, Jehovah, have created it."

But even in Israel, though so wondrously favoured, there were many who murmured at the long delay in the fulfilment of the Divine promises. The folly and danger of such an attitude of heart is vividly depicted.

"9. Woe to him who strives with his Creator—(him), a poor potsherd amidst the (million) potsherds of the earth![4] Shall the clay say to him that shapes it, 'What makest thou?' Shall thy work say, 'He has no hands'? 10. Woe to him who says to his father, 'What begettest thou?' or to his mother, 'What bringest thou forth?' 11. Thus says Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, concerning

[1] Make them unfit to meet Cyrus in war.

[2] The gates and bars of Babylon were of brass and iron. Herod., i. 179. **Isa. xlv. 2-11.**

[3] Enormous treasures were stored in the dark recesses of temples and in the underground vaults of the rich. Some of the greatest hoards remained untouched till they were plundered by Darius. Herod., i. 187.

[4] An allusion to man being made from the earth.

things to come: Ask Me, (not your idols or false prophets), for My sons, and for the work of My hands leave Me to care. 12. I made the earth, and created man on it.[1] My hands stretched out the heavens and I lay My commands on all their host. 13. I have raised up him, (Cyrus), in righteousness, and I will smooth all his paths before him; he shall build My city, and he shall set free My banished ones, without a (redemption) price and without a reward, says Jehovah of Hosts."

Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Sabæans, subdued by Cyrus, and led off by him triumphantly in chains to Asia, will see the wondrous deliverance vouchsafed to Israel, and will entreat to be united with them, feeling that Jehovah alone is the true God.

"14. Thus says Jehovah: The wealth of Egypt and the gains of Ethiopia, and the tall Sabæans, will come over to thee and become thine;[2] they will follow behind thee; they will go in chains and fall before thee, and pay reverence to thee, saying, 'God is with thee; there is none else; no God beside.'

"15. Verily thou art a God who hidest thy purposes; (but once revealed, they shew thee), O God of Israel, to be (indeed) a Saviour![3]

"16. Ashamed and confounded are they all; turned away in confusion are the makers of idols. 17. But Israel shall be saved by Jehovah, with an everlasting salvation: ye will no more be ashamed or confounded for ever. 18. For thus says Jehovah that created the heavens—He is the true God—that made and perfected the earth: He it was who established it, forming it not to be waste, but to be inhabited. I am Jehovah, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken (by My prophets) in secret, (but openly); not in some part of the land of darkness:[4] I have not used empty words to the house of Jacob when I said, 'Seek Me:'[5] I, Jehovah, speak the truth, I foretell what will surely happen."

[1] **Isa. xlv. 12-19.**

[2] "Thy slaves." Cyrus transferred the Egyptians taken in his battles with Crœsus, to other lands. On the Sabæans, see vol. i. p. 312.

[3] Exclamation of the prophet.

[4] Perhaps an allusion to the heathen claim to speak by the dead from Sheol; perhaps to the dark and uninhabited wilderness. Eichhorn translates it, "dark corners of the earth."

[5] Cheyne's translation, "Seek me as chaos," is unintelligible. I have adopted the rendering of Luther and De Wette. Eichhorn and Delitzsch render it "in the deserts;" Ewald, "seek ye me in vain," as in A. V.

Jehovah once more appeals to the heathen themselves to judge His claims compared with those of idols.

"20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye escaped of nations.[1] They have no understanding that set up the wood of their image, and pray to a god that cannot save. 21. Make known and bring forward your cause;[2] let them (the defenders of the idols) consult together. Who has declared this (great deliverance) from of old? Who has made it known in the past? Was it not I, Jehovah? There is no God else, beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me! 22. Turn ye to Me and be ye, (also), saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else!

"23. By Myself have I sworn; from My mouth that speaks truth has gone forth the word, and it shall not be reversed: That unto Me every knee shall bow and every tongue swear (homage). 24. In Jehovah alone, shall it be said, are righteousness and might. To Him shall all come, and all shall be ashamed, who raged against Him. 25. In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified and glory."

A new discourse now begins. The gods of Babylon will be overthrown and carried off in triumph. Israel may well trust a God so faithful, and the idol worshippers ponder His mighty acts and seek a share in His favour.

"XLVI. 1. Bel sinks down,[3] Nebo falls[4] prostrate;[5] their images are laid on the beasts of burden and the draught-oxen; your gods,

[1] Primarily, the fugitives of the various nations who had fled before Cyrus. In its higher aspect, as a prediction of the future of the Church in all ages, it may also well refer to the remnant of the heathen who escape the final judgments of God on the earth. See ver. 23. **Isa. xlv. 20-25; xlvi. 1.**

[2] Arguments in favour of their idols.

[3] Bel = Baal. See vol. i. p. 218; vol. v. p. 367.

[4] Nebo, with Merodach and Bel, were the chief gods of Babylon. So great indeed was Nebo, that nearly all the kings have his name incorporated with their own—as Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus. Nebuchadnezzar calls himself "the beloved of Nebo, him who rules over the armies of heaven and earth." This god is also spoken of as "the chief god," the orderer of the world, the god of knowledge, of wisdom, of oaths, the creator of friendship, the author of writing, and the "Scribe of the Universe." Schrader, on Isa. xlvi. 1.

[5] The gods of Babylon, with the peoples who worshipped them, submitted to Cyrus, but he did not injure the idols, or shew them any dishonour; taking pains, from the first, for policy, to honour them in all ways, and profess himself their humble worshipper, paying homage to them, as will be shewn hereafter, from the inscriptions.

which ye carry about, (O Babylonians), are laden on the beasts; they are a heavy load to the weary creatures! 2. The idols fall prostrate,[1] they sink down[2] together, they cannot rescue their images—the load of the beasts,—but are gone[3] into captivity!

"3. Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob and all the remnant of the house of Israel, ye who have been a burden (to Me) from your birth,[4] 4. and have been caressed by Me since your first hour—I am still the same even to your old age (in the distant future), for even to your gray hairs I will carry (you); I have done it (in the past) and will still bear you (in days to come): I will carry you and deliver you.

"5. To whom (of the gods) will ye liken Me, with which of them will you put Me on a footing, or compare Me, that we may be equal? 6. They, (the heathen),[5] shake out their gold from the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, to make it into a god, and then they fall down and worship it. 7. The workmen take it on their shoulders and carry it, and fix it up in its place, and it stands there, and cannot move from the spot; when one flees to it, it cannot answer, or save him out of his trouble. 8. Think on this, and act manfully;[6] take it to heart, ye rebellious! 9. and think on the past—what has happened from of old—(My predictions that have been fulfilled, My mighty deeds wrought for you, which shew) that I am God and none else; that I am God, and no one like Me, 10. revealing the end from the beginning, and from ancient times what has not even yet happened. He who says, 'My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure,' 11. who calls a bird of prey from the East,[7] the man who is to execute His purpose, from a far country.[8] Not only have I spoken it, I will also bring it to pass—I have decreed and will carry it out! 12. Hearken unto Me, therefore, ye obdurate[9] ones, who are far from being righteous, 13. I have brought near (the full revelation of) My

[1] Collapse—sink together. **Isa. xlvi. 2-13.**

[2] Literally, "as when one's knees give way."

[3] Literally, "their souls are gone," *i.e.*, themselves.

[4] An allusion to the Exodus. [5] Whether heathen Jews or others.

[6] De Wette, Gesenius, and Eichhorn translate the word thus. Knobel, Delitzsch, and Nägelsbach render it "be firm." Cheyne, following Lagarde, has "be deeply ashamed"; but this seems to me to be very forced. The word comes either from an obsolete root, meaning "to crush or press together," as was done with the cakes of dried grapes—or from the word for "man," but as it occurs only in this single passage, critics differ, and always will do so, as to its force.

[7] Elam. [8] Media.

[9] Literally, "stout hearted" (in wickedness). The ungodly and rebellious among the Jews are meant, who refused to believe in the restoration of Israel, or its deliverance by Jehovah.

righteousness,[1] it is not far off ; My deliverance (of Israel) will not be long delayed, and I will give salvation in Zion and My glory to Israel."

In the next utterance of the prophet the impending doom of Babylon is once more proclaimed. The great city is addressed as a haughty virgin of high birth, who is henceforth to pass from splendour to debasing servitude. Her treatment of Israel is to be returned into her own bosom, and none of her sorcerers or magi will be able to avert the calamity.

"XLVII. 1. Come down[2] (from thy throne of glory) and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground, not on thy throne, O daughter of the Chaldæans, for thou shalt no more be called 'The delicate,' and 'The luxurious.' 2. Take the mill-stones and grind meal, (the work of the lowest slave girl),[3] take off thy veil, cut short the long skirts of thy robe, uncover thy leg, wade through streams! 3. Thy nakedness will be uncovered, and thy dishonour seen. I will take vengeance on thee and spare no man. 4. But *our* Redeemer,[4] Jehovah of Hosts is His name, is the Holy One of Israel!

"5. Sit silent; get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldæans, for thou shalt no more be called 'The mistress of kingdoms.' 6. I was wroth with My people (Israel), I dishonoured My inheritance and gave them into thy hands, and thou didst shew them no mercy, thou madest thy yoke grievous even to the old (among them). 7. Thou saidst, 'I will be a queen[5] for ever;' thou didst not take these things to heart, nor remember how they must end.

"8. Hear, therefore, thou haughty one, throned, (as thou supposest), in security, and saying in thy heart, 'I am (the first of nations); there

[1] In freeing Israel, and thus fulfilling His promises. [2] **Isa. xlvii. 1-8.**

[3] Grinding the daily flour of the household was the task of the humblest slave girls. Exod. xi. 5. Job xxxi. 10. Hom., *Od.*, xx. 105-108. The mill consists simply of two round stones, the under one slightly higher towards the middle ; the upper one, hollow, to fit it : two handles rising from it, by which to turn it round, and a hole being put in the centre, for letting in the grain. I saw two women grinding at Joppa. They sat opposite each other, pushing the upper stone round, each half way, quickly: the flour falling on a cloth on which the mill-stones had been set These were about two feet across. Bovet's *Egypt*, p. 310. Luke xvii. 35. Matt xxiv. 41. *Land and Book*, p. 527.*

[4] Hebrew, Gôĕl.

[5] Lady, mistress.

is no other, besides, like me.[1] I shall never sit a widow, (my kingdom lost), or know the loss of children.[2] 9. Both these calamities will come on thee suddenly,[3] on the same day—loss of children and widowhood; they will come on thee in fullest measure, notwithstanding the multitude of thy divinations, and thy countless magic spells (to ward off evil). 10. Thou fanciedst thyself safe in thy wickedness: thou saidst, 'No one sees me!' Thy 'wisdom'[4] and knowledge have led thee astray, so that thou sayest in thy heart, 'I am (the first of nations); there is no other besides.' 11. Therefore evil shall come on thee which thou knowest not how to charm away;[5] calamity shall overtake thee, and thou shalt not be able to avert it (by thy rites);[6] utter ruin shall befall thee suddenly and unexpectedly![7]

"12. Keep on then with thy divinations, and thy many magic arts, in which thou hast toiled since thy youth; it may be that thou mayest get good from them, and even strike terror (into thine enemies)! 13. But if thou art wearied with the spells,[8] (prescribed to avert destruction), let those skilled in reading the heavens, the observers of the stars, who tell thee, each new moon, what is about to come on thee, stand up and save thee!"[9]

But all such helps are vain.

"14. Behold, all these (soothsayers and diviners) will be like stubble; the flames (of the coming calamity) will burn (up) them (as well as others; they will not be able to save even their own lives from the conflagration); it will be no gentle fire to warm one's self at, or to sit before!

"15. Thus will it be with (these dealers in sorceries) with whom thou weariest thyself, trafficking with them[10] (in their arts) from thy youth—they will flee every one his own way—none shall (be able to) save thee!"

[1] Holds the same rank. Other kingdoms were not worthy the name.

[2] The loss of States.

[3] **Isa. xlvii. 9–15.**

[4] Babylon was the great seat of the "wise" and "learned" in magic arts connected with heathenism. It was, indeed, as I have said, already, the Rome of Western Asia, in Bible ages, as a great religious centre, while its wedge-shaped writing was that used even as far off as Palestine. To read and write was in fact as common then as it is now with us, in Babylon and the lands which she influenced.

[5] I agree with Knobel, Diestel, Ewald, Delitzsch, Eichhorn, and others in preferring this reading.

[6] Literally, "to atone for it."

[7] Without thy knowing (beforehand).

[8] "Counsels" given by the diviners.

[9] This is said in irony.

[10] Some prefer to understand this clause of the traders with whom Babylon had driven its mighty commerce.

A new discourse now begins, addressed to the great body of the exiles. Honouring Jehovah by outward homage, their heart and life were alike contrary to His law. Having predicted their captivity on account of their rebelliousness, long before it took place, He had thus shewn Himself to be the only true God. He was about to take steps towards their deliverance. Would that they might even now give ear, and share in the glorious salvation near at hand!

"XLVIII. 1. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob,[1] called by the name of Israel, come forth from the waters of Judah,[2]—who swear by the name of Jehovah, and praise the God of Israel, but not in sincerity or in righteousness. 2. For they call themselves (children) of the Holy City,[3] and stay themselves [4] on the God of Israel, Jehovah of Hosts is His name."

Jehovah alone is to be acknowledged, if only from His having so long before predicted the events about to happen.

"3. The former things, (now fulfilled), I announced long ago; out of My mouth they went forth,[5] and I predicted them; I carried them out suddenly (and unexpectedly), and they came to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou wast hard in thy heart, and that thy neck was a sinew of iron,[6] and thy forehead brass, 5. I foretold the future to thee from of old; I declared it to thee before it came to pass, lest thou shouldst say, 'My idol has done it, my image of wood and my image of metal have decreed it.'[7] 6. Thou hast heard (the prophecies)—there, see them all (fulfilled); must not you yourselves own it? From

[1] **Isa. xlviii. 1–6.**

[2] The patriarch of the tribe is compared to a fountain head.

[3] This name for Jerusalem occurs here for the first time. It is found only in Isaiah and the later books, Dan. ix. 24; Neh. xi. 1, 18; Matt. iv. 5; xxvii. 53.

[4] Call on Jehovah; in words, at least, not forsaking Him.

[5] This is the seventh appeal to prophecy as a witness for God.

[6] Like an iron band or collar.

[7] Most of the Jews remained in Babylon among the heathen, whom they imitated more and more, becoming almost a part of them. Ezekiel, xx. 30, tells us the fearful extent to which idolatry prevailed among them.

this time forth I foretell new things to you, hidden things which you did not know. 7. They are ordained now,' not long ago; thou hast not heard of them before to-day, lest thou shouldst say, 'Behold, I knew them.' 8. Thou hast neither heard them nor known them, nor was thine ear opened (to them in the past), for I knew that thou art altogether untrue (to Me), and that thou wast called Rebellious from thy birth. 9. (It is only) for My name's sake I have restrained My anger, and for My own glory that I am patient towards thee, not to cut thee off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver (is refined);[2] I have purified thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For My own sake, for My own sake only, will I fulfil My promise,[3] for how should My name be profaned? Nor will I give My glory to another."

Oh that Israel would take to heart that Jehovah alone has foretold what is about to happen, and is thus the only true God!

"12. Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called one: I am He, I am the First and the Last. 13. My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand spanned the heavens; I spoke My (creating word) to them, and, forthwith (both earth and heaven) stood up (before me)!

"14. All ye, (sons of Israel), assemble yourselves, and hear. Who among the gods has foretold this (which is about to happen)? He whom Jehovah has loved will perform His will on Babylon, and His chastisement on the Chaldæans! 15. I, even I have said it, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way shall be prosperous. 16. Draw near to Me, hear ye this, I have not, from the beginning, spoken in secret. From the time what is happening began, there was I. (directing and ordering all)."

The prophet himself next speaks to Israel.

"And now the Lord Jehovah has sent me, with His Spirit. 17. Thus says Jehovah, thy Redeemer,[4] the Holy One of Israel: I am Jehovah thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee in the

[1] **Isa. xlviii. 7-17.**

[2] The melting of silver requires a great heat, 1,873° of Fahrenheit. The troubles set on Israel were heavy, but not overwhelming. Eichhorn renders the verse, "I smelted thee because thou wast not pure silver, and drew off the best from thee in the furnace of affliction."

[3] Literally, "do it."

[4] Göēl.

way thou shouldst go. 18. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! Then would thy peace have been (full) as a river, and thy righteousness [1] like the waves of the sea; 19. thy seed, also, would have been as the sand, and thy children as its grains.[2] Thy [3] name would not have been cut off (from the Holy Land) nor destroyed (in it) from before Me."

The faithful remnant of Israel will, however, be delivered. Their triumphant departure from Babylon rises before the eyes of the prophet. Perhaps he intends an appeal to them, to keep this great aim steadily in view.

"20. Get ye out of Babylon! flee from Chaldæa! Proclaim it! shout it aloud with rejoicing cries! tell it! send it abroad to the ends of the earth! say, 'Jehovah has redeemed His servant Jacob, 21. and they suffered no thirst in the deserts through which He led them; for He caused waters to flow out of the rocks for them; He clave the stone and the waters gushed out.' 22. But there is no peace, no prosperity, to the ungodly (among you, who follow idols and refuse to hear My voice), says Jehovah!"

With the forty-ninth chapter a new section of the book opens. Israel, in its various and often opposing features, is now the theme. The "Servant of Jehovah" is introduced as turning to the heathen nations, and revealing Himself to the Gentiles, in weariness at the stubborn impenitence of the mass of His people.

"XLIX. 1. Hearken to me, ye distant isles and coasts of the sea! Listen, ye far-off peoples: Jehovah called me (to His service) from the womb; from my mother's lap He called me by my name (as His servant).[4] 2. He made my mouth like a sharp sword,[5] He hid me in the

[1] Righteousness is here, from the parallelism, equivalent to "prosperity," given them by God, in His righteousness—that is, in the righteous, or faithful, fulfilment of His promises. **Isa. xlviii. 18–22; xlix. 1, 2.**

[2] Literally, "entrails," the antecedent is almost necessarily "the sand," but some make "the sea" the antecedent, and translate the word "entrails" as referring to the fish. Cheyne does so, hardly with propriety, as I think.

[3] Hebrew, His.

[4] Jer. i. 5. Gal. i. 15.

[5] Heb. iv. 12 Eph. vi. 17. Rev. i. 16; xix. 15.

shadow of His hand (to protect me), and made me a smooth arrow, and put me in His quiver.[1] 3. 'Thou art My servant,[2] O Israel,' said He, 'in whom I will glorify Myself.' 4. But I (the servant of Jehovah) had said, 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; verily my right, (the recompense of my toil), is with God, and my reward with my God.'"

But, though for the time cast down, the time of reward will come, when God will restore His kingdom among men, and spread the worship of Jehovah among the heathen. The true Israel, who are "the Servant of Jehovah," however vain their efforts to lead their brethren to serve Jehovah, in the past, will hereafter prevail.

"5. To this replied Jehovah,[3] who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel might be gathered to Him; for this am I honoured in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength. 6. He answered, I say, speaking thus: 'It is too little that thou shouldst be My servant, merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to lead back the preserved of Israel: so I appoint thee to be a light to the heathen, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth.'

"7. Thus says Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the people abhor, to the servant of rulers: Kings shall see (Him) and rise up (in His honour), princes shall bow down (before Him) in reverence to Jehovah, who is faithful (to His promises), and to the Holy One of Israel that chose thee.

"8. Thus says Jehovah: In the season of favour I will hear thee, and in the day of deliverance I will help thee, and I will protect thee, and appoint thee for a covenant of the people,[4] to raise up the land, to portion out the desolate heritages, 9. that thou mayest say to the prisoners, 'go forth,' and to those that are in the darkness (of dungeons), 'come to the light.' They shall feed (as the flock of Jehovah) along the ways, and even on all the bare hills there will be pasture for them. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the mirage

[1] The figures of the sword and arrow illustrate the power of His words, sharp and penetrating. [2] **Isa. xlix. 3-10.** [3] Eichhorn.

[4] The deliverance from Babylon will be a pledge or sign of a covenant that all the rest will follow—the raising up the land, etc. (of Palestine).

distress them, nor the sun smite them, for He that has pity on them shall lead them, and shall guide them to springs of water. 11. And I will level all My mountains into a (smooth) road,[1] and raise My highways (in the valleys). 12. Behold, these come from far, (in the west), and, lo, these from the distant north, and these from the (southern) sea, and these from the land of Sinim![2]

"13. Sing, O Heavens; be joyful, O Earth; break forth into jubilee, O mountains, for Jehovah has comforted His people, and has pity on his afflicted ones. 14. But Zion said, 'Jehovah has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.' 15. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Even she may forget—yet I will not forget thee! 16. Behold, I have written thy name on the palms of My hands;[3] thy walls are continually before Me. 17. Thy sons shall make haste (to thee, to rebuild thee); those that destroyed and laid thee waste shall depart from thee.

"18. Lift up thine eyes round about, (O Jerusalem), and look! All these (throngs) gather themselves together and come to thee. As I live, says Jehovah, thou shalt surely array thyself with them, as (a woman with her) ornaments, and bind them round thee as a bride doth (her girdle of price)! 19. Thy ruins and desolate places, and thy ravaged land, will be too narrow for its inhabitants, and those that destroyed thee[4] will be far away. 20. The children born to thee (among thy exiles) after that thou hadst lost their fathers and mothers, (carried off from thee), shall yet say in thine ears, 'The place is too narrow for me; make room, (my neighbour), that I may have space to dwell.' 21. Then shalt thou, (Jerusalem), say in thine heart, 'Who has borne me these, seeing I was robbed of my children and desolate; a captive and an outcast? Behold, I was left altogether lonely: where have these been?'"

Even the heathen will aid in the restoration of the banished ones.

[1] **Isa. xlix. 11-21.**

[2] The farthest east of the world. See Gesenius, *Thes.*, s. v., and Delitzsch, *Jes.*, 2te Auf., pp. 712, ff. The "dispersion" would gather from all the earth. Tsin was an ancient name of China. Nöldeke questions if China be meant, but on weak grounds. *Bibel. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 331. Prof. Lacouperie thinks that beyond question Sinim means "the land of the Shinas" of ancient and modern times, on the slopes of the Hindoo-Khoosh. The population then was the most distant known in the time of Cyrus. They are on the north-west of India. The Chinese Empire, he says, was not founded till B.C. 221. *Bab. and Orient. Record*, i. 45-48.

[3] Isa. xliv. 5.

[4] Literally, "swallowed thee up."

"22. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold[1] I will lift up My hand to the nations, and set up My banner to the peoples, and they shall bring thy (young) sons in their bosom, and thy (young) daughters on their shoulders. 23. And kings shall be thy foster fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee, with their face to the earth, and kiss the dust of thy feet,[2] and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah—Him, trusting in whom, no one shall be ashamed."

The faint-hearted doubt the possibility of deliverance from Babylon, but the prophet repeats the Divine assurance.

"24. 'Can the prey be taken from the mighty one; can the captives of the terrible one really escape?'

"25. Thus says Jehovah, Even the captives of the mighty one shall be taken (from him), and the prey of the terrible one shall be delivered, for I will fight with him who fights with thee, and I will save thy children. 26. And I will make thy oppressors eat their own flesh —(turning against each other), and they will be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine,[3] and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and that thy Redeemer is the Mighty One of Jacob."

Jehovah closes this address by repudiating once more the idea that He has cast off Israel, as the murmurers alleged.

"L. 1. Thus says Jehovah: Where is your mother's bill of divorcement with which I have dismissed her?[4] To which of My creditors have I sold you, (My children)?[5] Behold, ye were sold for your sins, and for your iniquities was your mother put away. 2. Why when I came to you (by My prophets), was there no man (who heard and obeyed)? Why, when I called, was there no one to answer (and give ear)? Is My hand too short, (too weak), to redeem (you)? Have I no

[1] **Isa. xlix. 22–26; l. 1, 2.** [2] Literally, "lick up."

[3] After the first victory of Cyrus over the Babylonians, various sections of the Babylonian army deserted to the conqueror, and henceforth fought against their former brethren. (*Cyrop.*, iv. 2.) The Babylonian vassal kings, Gobryas and Gadatas, did the same, and this defection and treachery become general. (*Cyrop.*, iv. 6; v. 1–3; xlvi. 1, etc.).

[4] Deut. xxiv. 1.

[5] 2 Kings iv. 1. Neh. v. 5. Matt. xviii. 25.

power to deliver? Behold, by My rebuke I dry up the sea, and turn rivers into dry land; their fish stink because there is no water, and die of thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens with darkness,[1] and cover them with (the blackness of) sackcloth!"[2]

A new section now introduces the prophet speaking in his own person.

"4. The Lord Jehovah, says he, has given me the tongue of the learned, that I may know how to speak comfort to the weary;[3] every morning He wakes my ear—(wakes it) to hear instruction.[4] 5. The Lord Jehovah has opened my ear, and I have not resisted nor turned away. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I have not hidden my face from shame and spitting.[5] 7. But the Lord Jehovah will help me, therefore I am not overwhelmed (by such treatment), but have set my face like a flint (against my opponents), and know that I shall not be put to shame. 8. He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand forth together. Who is my adversary? let him come near to me. 9. Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they will all perish like a (moth-eaten) garment, the moth shall eat them up. 10. Who is there among you that fears Jehovah, that hearkens to the voice of His servant, though he walk in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of Jehovah and stay himself upon his God."

Destruction will in the end overtake the adversaries.

"11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire (against the godly), and (as it were) gird yourselves with firebrands: Out, get ye into the flame of your own fire, and into the firebrands ye have kindled! This shall

[1] Isa. l. 3-11. [2] Rev. vi. 12. Isa. xx. 2. Joel i. 8.

[3] Literally, "to help the weary with a word."

[4] Literally, "as the learned."

[5] The exactly similar treatment of our Lord will strike all. Jeremiah also had experience of such shameful treatment (Jer. xx. 2, 7). We find it also in Psalm xxii. 7. Job further speaks of it in his own case (Job xxx. 10). Scourging was common (2 Cor. xi. 24). So also the seizing the beard and pulling it out (Neh. xiii. 25). *Hor. Serm.*, iii. 1, 133. Matt. xxvi. 67; xxvii. 30; 2 Chron. xxv. 16; Acts v. 40. Gesenius quotes a poem, in which the hair torn from the beard of an Abyssinian martyr, and the teeth struck from his mouth, were gathered and sent off to a distance as relics. *Jesaia*, vol. ii. p. 142.

ye have from My hand (says Jehovah); ye shall lie down in sorrow!"[1]

Such discourses, read and pondered by the godly among the exiles, who, in the truest sense, were the "Servants of Jehovah," were the means designed by Providence to keep alive and strengthen faith in Jehovah. The preaching of the days of the Captivity comes before us in these verses. "Morning by morning," to use the phrase of the prophets, fresh exhortations quickened the religious revival. The next runs thus:

"LI. 1. Hearken to Me,[2] ye that strive after righteousness, and seek Jehovah! Look to the rock from which ye were hewn and the quarry-hole from which ye were dug.[3] 2. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah, that bare you; how I called him when only a single individual, and yet blessed and increased him.[4] 3. For Jehovah will (assuredly) comfort Zion. He will comfort all her ruins: He will make her like Eden, though she is now a wilderness, and like the garden of Jehovah, though she is now a desert; joy and gladness shall (once more) be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

"4. Hearken to Me, My people: give ear to Me, O My nation: for instruction will go forth from Me, and I will set up My Law for a light of the peoples. 5. My righteousness (in the fulfilment of My promises) is near; My salvation is about to break forth, and My (resistless) arms will judge the nations; the isles (of the west) will hope in Me, and on My arm will they trust.

"6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath: for the heavens will vanish away like smoke, and the earth fall to pieces, like a (moth-eaten) garment, and its inhabitants die like flies:[5] but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness will never perish.[6] 7. Hearken to Me, ye who know righteousness, ye people in

[1] Luke xvi. 24. [2] Isa. li. 1–7.

[3] A figure for the origin of the nation, explained in the next line.

[4] If Israel was protected from all enemies and blessed when it consisted of Abraham and Sarah alone the nation being yet unborn how much more would God protect and bless His people now, against all foes and oppressors!

[5] The Chinnim of the Egyptian plagues, Ex. viii. 24, 31; Ps. cv. 31. The Talmudists used the word of lice, but in error.

[6] Literally, "break in pieces (like a ruin)."

whose heart is My Law; fear not the reproach of (frail) men, neither be afraid of their revilings. 8. For the moth shall eat them up as it does a garment,[1] and the worm shall eat them as it does wool: but My righteousness shall be for ever, and My salvation from generation to generation."

Animated by such words from Jehovah, the prophet directly apostrophizes Him, or, rather, His mighty arm.

"9. Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of Jehovah! Awake, as in the ancient days, the generations of old. Art not thou the arm that cut off the (Egyptian) sea-monster,[2] that hewed in pieces the dragon[3] (of the Nile)? 10. Art thou not it that dried up the (Red) Sea, the waters of that great flood; that made the depths of the sea a path for the ransomed to pass over?"

Who can doubt, then, that He will deliver Israel from Babylon!

"11. So, the redeemed of Jehovah will return (from Babylon), and come amidst loud rejoicings to Zion; everlasting joy, (like a garland) on their head; they will reach out their hand to gladness and joy at last, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."[4]

Jehovah again addresses the exiles.

"12. I, even I, am He that comforteth you; who art thou that thou art afraid before man who dies; before the son of man who withers like grass,[5] 13. and forgettest Jehovah, thy Maker, that stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and that thou tremblest continually, all the day long, before the fury of the oppressor, when he draws (the bow) to destroy thee? And where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The prisoner bowed down in the dungeon will speedily

[1] **Isa. li. 8-14.**

[2] Rahab=sea-monster, used as a figure of Egypt—Ps. lxxxvii. 4; lxxxix. 10; lxxiv. 13, 14. Pharaoh is spoken of in the same way, Ezek. xxix. 3; xxxii. 2; so also Babylon, Isa. xxvii. 1. "Seas," it must be remembered, refer to the Nile and its great canals.

[3] The crocodile="the dragon," is stamped on Roman-Egyptian coins as a symbol of the country. Gesenius, *Jes.*, vol. ii. p. 146.

[4] The expression is, literally, a figure of one reaching forth the hand and greeting, after a long absence from them. [5] Literally, "is given (to withering), like grass."

be set free, and shall not die in the pit, neither shall his bread fail; 15. for I am Jehovah thy God, who roueth up the sea so that its waves roar. Jehovah of Hosts is His name. 16. And I put My words in thy mouth,[1] (O servant of Jehovah), and cover thee in the shadow of My hand, that I may stretch out (a new) heaven, lay the foundations of (a new) earth, and say to Zion, 'Thou art My people;' (thus effacing the miseries of the past and making all things new, for thee)!"

The prophet now addresses Jerusalem, as the capital of the restored Israel.

"17. Awake! awake! arise, O Jerusalem, who hast emptied, at the hand of Jehovah, the cup of His wrath; who hast drunk and swallowed down the dregs of the great cup that made thee reel. 18. There was no one to lead her[2] of all the sons she had borne; no one, of all the sons she had brought up, to take her by the hand, (in her trouble). 19. Two calamities happened to thee, who will console thee? desolation and destruction, famine and the sword, how shall I comfort thee? 20. Thy sons fainted, they lay (powerless) at the corners of all the streets, like a stag caught in a net; they were full of the wrath of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God.[3]

"21. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine. 22. Thus says thy Lord, Jehovah,—thy God who maintains the cause of His people, Behold I take out of thy hand the cup that made thee reel, the great cup of My wrath; thou shalt not drink it again. 23. I put it into the hand of them that afflicted thee, who said to thy soul, 'Cast thyself down that we may walk on thee,' and thou madest thy back like the ground and like the street, to them that trod over thee.[4]

"LII. 1. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy best robes, O Jerusalem, thou holy city! for (heathen)—uncircumcised and unclean—shall no more come unto thee. 2. Shake off from thee the dust (in which thou hast sat); arise and sit (once more, as a queen): loosen the chains (of thy slavery), from thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

"3. For thus says Jehovah: Ye were sold (to Babylon) without any

[1] **Isa. li. 16-23; lii. 1-3.** [2] Jerusalem.

[3] The reference is to Jerusalem on the eve of its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

[4] In the ceremony of the Doseh in Egypt, lines of people cast themselves down side by side, while personages reported holy ride over them. Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

payment (for you, to Me, your Lord); ye shall be redeemed from her without money (paid for you, to them). 4. For thus says the Lord Jehovah: My people went down of old [1] to Egypt, to sojourn there, (and were oppressed and enslaved), and (at a later time) Assyria oppressed them without provocation. 5. And now—what have I to do here (in Babylon), says Jehovah, since My people have been torn away (from their fatherland) as slaves, and they that lord it over them yell out their hatred of them, says Jehovah, and My name is continually, all day long, reviled? 6. Therefore My people shall know My name, (in the revelation of My Divine power), and learn in that day, that it is I who say, 'Behold, here am I.'"

Full of glowing hope the prophet sees the great deliverance as if already accomplished, his brethren joyfully proclaiming the good news, and messengers hastening to Judah to announce them there.

"7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, who proclaims peace, who announces good news, who proclaims deliverance, who says to Zion, 'Thy God reigneth!' 8. Hark! thy watchmen (the prophets) [2] lift up the voice (from their tower of vision); they lift up a prolonged cry of joy, for they see eye to eye—(close at hand) [3]—the return of Jehovah to Zion. 9. Break forth into loud rejoicing, shout all together, ye ruins of Jerusalem, for Jehovah has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem! 10. Jehovah has bared His holy arm [4] in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the deliverance wrought by our God. 11. Get you out (O Judah)! Get you out! set forth from this place—(Babylon)—take nothing that is unclean; get ye out of the midst of her; purify yourselves (O Levites), who bear the (sacred Temple) vessels of Jehovah.[5] 12. (But all this can be leisurely done), for ye shall

[1] Literally, "at the first." **Isa. lii. 4–12.** [2] Isa. lvi. 10.

[3] Num. xiv. 14. Exod. xxxiii. 11. Num. xii. 8.

[4] The heroes of antiquity threw back their upper garment from the right arm and shoulder, in order to fight without hindrance. See Ezek. iv. 7. If one were unwilling or unable to fight, he kept his hand in the bosom of his robe. Ps. lxxiv. 11.

[5] The land of Babylon was unclean. They were to take nothing defiled with them, and guard themselves from Levitical impurity, since Jehovah was their leader. The Levites especially, who bore the vessels of the Temple, now restored, were to purify themselves—by cutting the hair, and washing their clothes and persons. Lev. viii. 6. Num. viii. 6, ff.

not go out (as from Egypt)[1] in trembling haste, nor will your march be a flight (as it was then); Jehovah will go before you; the God of Israel will guard your rear."

From this vision of the temporal restoration of Israel, we pass to a new and distinct section of the prophet. The peculiar expression, "the Servant of Jehovah," which bears so many meanings, in different connections, is now introduced in language continually used, in the Gospels and Epistles,[2] as vividly illustrating the relations of our Lord Jesus Christ to mankind, and the details of His sufferings on our behalf. This, however, is quite compatible with an original reference intelligible to the contemporaries of the prophet, to whom the whole of his addresses were delivered, as relating to their own circumstances and prospects. Their applicability, in many parts, to our Lord, could not, of course, have been dreamed by the generation which lived five hundred years before He was born, and, indeed, is not, even yet, acknowledged by the Jewish race, as referring to Him. In its first and direct meaning, therefore, the name "Servant of Jehovah" seems to have been intended, in these chapters, as a personification of the true servants of God among the exiles, who had borne so much, alike from their brethren and their oppressors, for their noble fidelity to their heavenly Master. To personify these faithful ones was specially natural in Hebrew poetry, which

[1] Exod. xii. 39. Deut. xvi. 3.

[2] Compare Isa. xlii. 1; Matt. xii. 18, ff.; Acts xiii. 47; Isa. xlix. 8, with 2 Cor. vi. 2. Isa. lii. 15, with Rom. xv. 21. Isa. liii. 1, with John xii. 38; Rom. x. 16. Isa. liii. 4, with Matt. viii. 17. Isa. liii. 5, 6, with 1 Pet. ii. 24. Isa. liii. 7, 8, with Acts v. 32. Isa. liii. 9, with 1 Pet. ii. 24. Isa. liii. 12, with Luke xxii 37.

Various critics have advanced one or other of the following views: (1) That the Servant of Jehovah was the whole body of the Exiles (2) The better portion of them. (3) The idealized office of the prophets, especially the Messiah, the ideal of all prophets. (4) The Messiah. The passages especially included in these interpretations are Isa. xlii. 1–7; xlix. 1–9; lii. 12; liii. 12.

delights in such impersonations, for even our colder English poets often personify countries, nations, parties, and principles, to give force and beauty to their verse. In no way could the prophet so effectively paint the trials and persecutions, even to martyrdom, of the Abdiels of the exile, or their approaching triumphant restoration to their own land, with the glorious re-establishment of the long-interrupted worship of Jehovah, in a new temple at Jerusalem, as by personifying them in the exquisite creation of an ideal individuality, which, unknown to him, supplied a striking parallel to that of the supreme Servant of Jehovah, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, indeed, a favourite conception with him, to which he constantly returns, with loving tenderness. Israel, or Jacob, is, again and again, called the Servant of Jehovah: the true godly Israel being, thus, idealized into a personality.[1]

The prophet now goes on to paint this Servant of Jehovah in the light in which he, though now for a time given over by God "to the curse" and "to reproaches"[2] among the heathen, would be viewed by the happy generations, who should, hereafter, through the reformation brought about in the race by the sore trials of exile, enjoy the favour of Jehovah, once more, in their restored home in Palestine. The Israel of the furnace of affliction—the godly among the exiles—had been truly for them "the Servant of the Lord," for, with all their fidelity to their heavenly Master, they had endured, for their whole lifetime, through long, long years, misery of every kind and of terrible intensity. But this grievous lot, apparently so little deserved by such worthies, had been the salvation of

[1] Isa. xli. 19; xliii. 10; xliv. 1, 21; xlv. 4; xlix. 3 (among other texts)
[2] Isa. xliii. 28.

their posterity. The sins of the nation had been visited on these outcasts from Zion, and God had already said, through the prophet, that it would receive, at His hands, double compensation for all its punishments, which these stricken ones had borne.[1]

"13. Behold,[2] My Servant shall prosper; he shall be high and glorious and greatly exalted.

"14. As many were shocked at thee (him—in the past), so marred and unlike that of a man was his visage, and his form unlike that of the sons of men—15. so, (hereafter), will he fill many nations with wonder;[3] kings shall close their mouths before him (in wonder at his deliverance and glory), for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall behold."

The prophet laments the coldness with which his revelations have been received, and then proceeds.

"LIII. 1. Who has believed our message,[4] and to whom has the arm of Jehovah, (that is, His secret purposes and working), been revealed? 2. For he, (the servant of Jehovah), grew up before us[5] like a tender shoot,[6] and as a sucker (from a root) in dry ground; he had no attraction nor comeliness,[7] and when we looked there was no beauty that we should desire him. 3. He was despised and forsaken of men; a man suffering pain[8] and acquainted with sickness, (or, 'knowing

[1] Isa. xl. 2. [2] **Isa. lii. 13-15; liii. 1-3.**

[3] The verb here is always translated "sprinkle," in the A. V., but this gives no intelligible meaning. In harmony with Hebrew usage, Jewish interpreters understand it of the dashing up of water, so as to scatter it in separate drops, and apply it to the casting out of the Gentiles before Israel. Mühlau und Volck, following Gesenius (*Thes.*, p. 868), compare the Arab *Naza*—(same sound as Hebrew verb), and give the meaning of "springing up for joy or fear." Thence it is used of water "springing up" over any obstacle, and hence of its being sprinkled, or thrown off in drops by any sudden force. "To sprinkle," so as to purify from guilt, is always connected with a preposition, and it would give no fitting parallel here to the rest of the verse. [4] Preaching, tidings.

[5] "Him," in Hebrew text. Ewald proposes "us," which certainly suits the following clauses.

[6] The sucker of a tree. [7] Some render it 'glory," or "majesty."

[8] According to some, "pains," but it also means sorrows. Exod. iii. 7. Lam. i. 12, 18. Ps. xxxii. 10; xxxviii. 18.

grief,')[1] and like one before whom we hide our face; he was despised and we esteemed him not. 4. Verily he has borne our pains and carried our sicknesses,[2] but we regarded him as one stricken, smitten, and laden with suffering by God, (for his own sins). 5. Yet he was pierced for our transgressions, he was maltreated[3] for our iniquities; the chastisement[4] of our peace[5] lay upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. 6. All we, like sheep, had gone astray; we had turned, every one, to his own way, yet Jehovah caused the iniquities of us all to come upon him. 7. He was oppressed and evil treated, but he opened not his mouth; like the lamb that is led to the slaughter, and the sheep that is dumb before its shearers, he opened not his mouth. 8. He was snatched away by prison and by judgment, and who was there among his generation, that said to himself, 'He was cut off from the land of the living (though, for his goodness, he ought to have had a long life); (who has said) that he was stricken for the transgressions of my people? 9. They gave him his grave with the wicked and with the oppressor at his death,[6] although he had done no wrong and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10. Yet it pleased Jehovah to smite him:[7] He put him to grief.[8] But though he gave his life an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and live long, and the purpose of Jehovah will prosper in his hand. 11. From the travail of his soul, he looks away (to what will follow), and is satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant make many righteous, and he bears on himself the load of their iniquities.

"12. Therefore will I give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong,[9] for he poured out his soul to death, and let himself be numbered with the transgressors; whereas he had borne the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Another address to Israel, and especially to Jerusalem, or rather to the ideal Zion of the future, embracing the

[1] Rendered sometimes, "sickness," but it also means "grief," literally "knowing grief," or possibly "sickness." Delitzsch translates, "a man of pains and acquainted with sickness." So also Ewald, De Wette, Knobel.

[2] Or "sorrows." **Isa. liii. 4-12.**

[3] Literally, "hurled down, and trampled on."

[4] Punishment. [5] Which brought us peace.

[6] Hebrew, deaths = martyr-death, pl. of honour. "Oppressor"—Ewald. This seems right from the parallelism with "wicked."

[7] Literally, "to crush Him to pieces"—as straw, for instance, beneath the rough sledge. [8] He laid grief—misery- on him. [9] A great company. Ewald.

Church in all ages, follows. Read by the faithful among the Hebrew exiles in Egypt, and, far off, on the banks of the Chebar, such words must have promoted the religious enthusiasm that made the Return possible; for, even now, they fill the heart with devout emotion.

"1. Sing aloud,[1] O (Zion, thou) barren One, who didst not bear (children,[2] thy people being in exile); break forth into songs of joy, and cry aloud in thy gladness, thou that didst not bring forth! Far more are Thy children, though (thou hast lain desolate), than the children of the married woman, says Jehovah. 2. Widen the space of thy tents;[3] let them stretch out their coverings without stint; lengthen thy tent-ropes and make thy tent-pins strong.[4] 3. For thou shalt spread forth on the right hand and the left, and thy sons shall drive out the heathen,[5] and inhabit anew the (now) desolate cities.

"4. Fear not, for thou shalt not be put to shame; be not cast down, for thou shalt not be a reproach; but wilt (instead) forget the shame of thy youth (in Egypt), and wilt not any more think of the reproach of thy childlessness,[6] (when thy sons were in Babylon). 5. For thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of Hosts is His name, and thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth shall He be called. 6. For Jehovah hath called thee (back again to Him), as (a husband recalls) the dejected and broken-spirited wife of his youth, (once sent away in shame). 7. For a brief moment I cast thee out, saith thy God, but with great pity will I gather thee (back to thy land). 8. In vehement indignation I hid My face for a moment from thee, but with everlasting loving-kindness will I have pity on thee, says Jehovah, thy Redeemer. 9. For this (punishment of thine) is like the waters of Noah's flood unto me; as I swore that they should no more overflow the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, or chasten thee (again). 10. For the mountains may move (from their place) and the hills be thrown (down), but My loving-kindness shall not remove from thee, nor My covenant of peace (towards thee) be broken, says Jehovah, that has pity upon thee."

Jerusalem, the centre of the new Kingdom of Israel, will be beyond measure glorious. The boldest style of Eastern

[1] **Isa. liv. 1-10.** [2] Isa. xlix. 21. [3] **Singular in Hebrew.**
[4] Literally, "break out." [5] Literally, "nations."
[6] Literally, "widowhood."

imagery is used to bring before the mind its future splendour, which is described in language that could never be applied, literally, to any city.

"11. O Thou afflicted,[1] tempest-tossed one, who hast had no comforter! Behold I will set off [2] thy (white) stones with glittering black,[3] and garnish thy foundations with sapphires, 12. and I will make thy battlements of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles,[4] and thy pinnacles of sparkling precious stones. 13. And all thy children will be disciples of Jehovah, and great shall be their peace. 14. Through righteousness shalt thou be securely established; thou shalt be (kept) far from dread of evil, for thou shalt not (need to) fear, and thou shalt have no (thought of) terror, for alarm shall not come near thee. 15. Behold, if strife be raised against thee, it will not be from Me; if an enemy gather in war against thee, he shall fall beneath thy walls." [5]

No one shall prevail against Zion, for Jehovah has all the agents of danger under His control.

"16. Behold, I have created the armourer who blows the coals in the smithy and makes a weapon for war,[6] and I have created the destroyer to destroy. 17. No weapon formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in accusation against thee, thou shalt prove guilty. This is the inheritance of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness given by Me, says Jehovah."

The apathy and moral insensibility of the exiles to the exhortations of the faithful prophets were well-nigh invincible. They listened, but gave no further heed. The attractions of Babylon, with its rich soil and commercial prosperity, outweighed, with all but a few, the inducements to return to the barren hills of Judah. Where they

[1] **Isa. liv. 11-17.** [2] Cement.

[3] Literally, "antimony," with which Jewish women painted their eyelids. 2 Kings ix. 30. Jer. iv. 30. 1 Chron. xxix. 2. Job xlii. 14, has a daughter called Kerenhappuch = "Horn of eye-paint." [4] Stones of fiery splendour.

[5] Literally, "he shall fall to thee" = "shall be broken against thee."

[6] Literally, "for its work."

were, they had the protection of a great empire, and opportunities on every hand for advancing their worldly interests; in Judæa they would have to face poverty and danger. Hence they were as little disposed to go back to Palestine as the rich Jews of Europe or America are at this moment. Yet no supineness on the part of their hearers could damp the ardour of the prophets. Sent by Jehovah to preach the Return, they exhausted every form of address to make it popular with their fellow-exiles. But the appeal, which next comes before us, reaches, beyond the immediate national crisis, to infinitely more glorious days. Jehovah Himself is introduced as urging them to seek the blessings He offers, rather than the material good afforded by Babylon, which, after all, did not satisfy the deeper craving of their hearts.

"LV. 1. Ho,[1] every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; ye that have no money, come, buy and eat! yea, come, buy wine and milk[2] without money and without price! 2. Why spend[3] money for what is not bread, and your earnings for that which does not satisfy? Hearken! hearken! to Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3. Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the neverfailing mercies[4] (promised to) David.[5] 4. Behold, I have appointed him a witness to the nations—a ruler and commander to the nations. 5. Behold, thou shalt call a people that thou dost not know, and a nation which thou hast not known, shall run to thee, on account of Jehovah, thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He has made thee glorious."

The prophet now turns to the perverse and stolidly obdurate among his countrymen, urging them to seek,

[1] Isa. lv. 1-5.

[2] Jerome, on this verse, tells us that it had led to the custom, in the Latin Churches, but not the African, of giving wine and milk to the newly-baptized.

[3] Literally, "weigh." [4] Or, loving-kindnesses. Ps. lxxxix. 28.

[5] 2 Sam. vii. 12-16.

while they might, an interest in the wondrous future of their race.

"6. Seek ye Jehovah,[1] while He may be found ; call ye upon Him while He is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. 8. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says Jehovah. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The promises of man are not always trustworthy, but those of Jehovah are sure as the course of nature.

"10. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither, but moisten the earth, and make it bring forth and sprout, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11. so shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth : it shall not return to Me without result, but shall accomplish that which I please, and make that prosper for which I sent it."

The exiles will assuredly, notwithstanding all that is in the way of their liberation, go forth from Babylon, with joy.

"12. For ye will go forth (from Babylon) with joy, and be led out in peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth before you, into singing, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn bush (of the desert) there will come up (on the line of march) the cypress, and instead of the prickly shrub (of the wilderness) there will spring up the myrtle tree, and they will remain for an everlasting name and sign of Jehovah's (great deeds), that will not pass away."

The superstitious and merely formal observance of the Sabbath still prevailed in Babylon.[2] A few, however, kept the sacred day more worthily.

"LVI. 1. Thus says Jehovah, Keep the Law and practise the right, for My deliverance[3] (of My people from Babylon) is near at hand,

[1] **Isa. lv. 6-13 ; lvi. 1.** [2] Isa. i. Ezek. xx. 12, 13, 16, 21, 24.
[3] For "the right," or "righteousness," the Rabbis read "charity," making that virtue the equivalent of righteousness.

and My righteousness is about to be revealed. 2. Blessed is the man that does this,[1] and the son of man who holds fast to it; who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds back his hand from doing any evil. 3. Let not the alien who has joined himself to Jehovah say, 'Jehovah will assuredly separate me (as an alien) from His people,' and let not the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am only a dry tree.' 4. For thus says Jehovah to the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and hold fast to My covenant: 5. I will give them, in My house and within My walls, a memorial[2] and a name, better than sons and daughters; yea, I will give them an everlasting name that will not perish. 6. As to the aliens who join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him, and to love the name of Jehovah, becoming His servants; those of them who keep the Sabbath and do not pollute it, but hold fast to My covenant, 7. I will bring to My Holy Mountain, and make them joyful in My House of Prayer. Their whole burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted upon My altar, for My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations. 8. The Lord Jehovah, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, I will gather others to him besides those gathered from his own tribes."[3]

The fifty-eighth chapter of Isaiah throws a striking light on the private life of the Hebrew exiles in Babylon. Precise in their religious observances, they followed only too closely the characteristic of their forefathers in Palestine, in the contrast between their professions and practice. Jehovah, addressing the prophet, is the speaker.

"LVIII. 1. Cry with a full throat,[4] keep nothing back, lift up thy voice like a war trumpet, and proclaim to My people their transgression and to the house of Jacob their sins. 2. They inquire of Me, (indeed), daily, desiring to know My purposes,[5] like a people that practises righteousness and has not forsaken the law of its God. They (even) ask of Me judgments of righteousness (against their oppressors), and desire the approach of God (to set them free).

[1] **Isa. lvi. 2-8; lviii. 1, 2.**
[2] Or "trophy;" literally, "hand." 2 Sam. xviii. 18. 1 Sam. xv. 12. Ezek. xxi. 24
[3] The prophecy comprised in Isa. lvi. 8-lvii. 21, is translated in vol. v. pp. 50, ff.
[4] As when one blows a trumpet note.
[5] Literally, "ways;" *i.e.*, in respect to their deliverance and restoration.

"3. 'Why do we fast,' say they, 'and Thou dost not take notice —why have we humbled our soul and Thou payest no regard to it?' Behold, (the reason is, because) in the day of your fasting[1] ye follow keenly your business affairs, and press on all your worldly work.[2] 4. Behold, ye fast with strife and wrangling, and smite (your labourers) with the fist, in wickedness. Ye do not so fast on such a day, as to make your voice to be heard on high. 5. Is this the kind of fast I love, the day when a man humbles his soul? Is (true fasting merely) to bow one's head like a bulrush, and to lie down in sackcloth and ashes? Wilt thou call that a fast, and a day acceptable to Jehovah?

"6. Is not this (rather), the fast that I choose—to loose the fetters wrongfully put on (your poor brethren), to undo the ties of their yoke, and let the oppressed go free, to tear off, (in short), every yoke.[3] 7. Is it not to break thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor into thy house (to lodge and feed them): and that, when thou seest the naked, thou clothe him, and hide not thy face from thine own people?

"8. (If thy fasts be like this), then thy light shall break forth like the morning, and thy prosperity[4] shall soon spring up; thy righteousness shall go before thee (on thy way back to Palestine), and the glory of Jehovah shall guard thy rear. 9. Then thou shalt call and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry and He will say, 'Here am I.' If thou banish oppression from thy midst, and the pointing of the finger (at the wretched, in contempt and derision), and fierce and contentious words;[5] 10. if thou minister of thy substance to the hungry, and satisfy the soul of the wretched; then shall thy light rise through the gloom (of thy present exile), and thy darkness will be like noonday, 11. and Jehovah will lead thee continually, and satisfy thy wants[6] in the thirsty desert, and fill thy bones with marrow, and thou shalt be like a well-watered garden,[7] like a spring of water, whose stream never fails.[8] 12. And thy sons shall rebuild the ruins of the past; thou shalt raise up again the foundations of former generations, and they will call thee 'The Rebuilder of the ruins,'[9] 'The Restorer of the inhabited streets.'

[1] Fasts and humiliations were observed during the exile, in remembrance of the fall of Jerusalem and Judah. Zech. vii. 2, ff.; viii. 19. **Isa. lviii. 3–12.**

[2] Or, oppress—drive on—all your workmen.

[3] Even in Babylon the richer Jews had enslaved the poorer, contrary to the Law. Debtors could be used as servants for six years, but must then be set free. Exod. xxi. 2. Lev. xxv. 39, ff. Deut. xv. 12, ff.

[4] Literally, "the healing of thy wound."

[5] See Isa. lviii. 4. Literally, "evil words."

[6] Literally, "soul."

[7] See illustration, **vol. v. p. 278.**

[8] Literally, "deceives."

[9] Literally, "gaps."

"13. If thou keep back thy foot [1] from the Sabbath so that thou dost not follow thy business on My holy day, if thou call the Sabbath 'a delight, the holy (day) of Jehovah, that is to be reverenced,' and thyself honour it by not doing thine own work on it, or following thine own business, or speaking (vain) words, 14. then thou shalt delight thyself in Jehovah, and I will make thee march in (to thine own country), over the heights of the land, and feed thee with (the fruits of) the inheritance of Jacob, thy father; for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken it."

The delay in the appearance of God on behalf of the exiles is on account of their sins.

"LIX. 1. Behold, the hand of Jehovah is not too short to deliver (you), nor is His ear dull so as not to hear, 2. but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, that He will not hear, 3. for your hands are foul with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips speak lies, your tongues murmur wickedness. 4. Every one accuses the other on unjust grounds; no one pleads (at law) with honesty; they trust in words void of truth, they speak falsely, they brood over [2] mischief and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch adders' eggs, (so evil are their doings); they weave spiders' webs, (so vain and idle are their schemes). He that eats one of their eggs, (who opposes their plans), will die, and if one of these eggs be trodden on, an adder comes out of it. 6. Their webs will not do for clothes, neither can men cover themselves with their works—(no use or good comes of them); their deeds are deeds of wickedness, violence is in their hands, 7. their feet run to evil, and they hasten to shed innocent blood; their thoughts of iniquity, desolation, and destruction, mark their paths. 8. They do not know the way of peace, and there is no uprightness in their courts; they make their paths crooked (for their own ends); whoever walks in them shall not know peace.

"9. It is on this account that (God's) judgment (on our oppressors) is (still) far from us, and that (His) righteousness, (bringing deliverance), does not come to us; we wait for light, but behold darkness; [3] for the morning beams, but walk in thick night. 10. We grope along the wall like blind men, like men without eyes; we stumble (even) at noon, as if it were twilight; we are in thick darkness,[4] like dead men.

[1] **Isa. lviii. 13, 14; lix. 1–10.** [2] Literally, "conceive."
[3] Light and darkness = prosperity and adversity.
[4] Ewald and Delitzsch, by an emendation, read "among those full of life."

11. We all growl like bears, (in our groaning), and mourn like doves;[1] we wait for judgment (on our oppressors), but it does not come; for deliverance, but it remains far from us.

"12. For our transgressions are many before Thee, and our sins witness against us; our transgressions are before us;[2] our sins are known to us, 13. even our apostasy and denial of Jehovah, our departing away from our God, our hard and false speaking, inventing and uttering from the heart lying words. 14. Yea, justice is thrust back, and uprightness made to stand far off, for truth has stumbled in the market-place, and justice is not allowed to enter (the place of judgment). 15. Truth, indeed, is left behind, (and is not to be found before our judges), and he who keeps himself from wrong-doing is plundered.

"Jehovah has seen all this, and it has been evil in His eyes that there was no justice (among you, between man and man). 16. He has seen that there was no man (to stand up for the right), and wondered that there was no one to come between (the wrong-doer and the wronged, no one to interpose, like Aaron, between the sound and the stricken). (Since), therefore, (there was no one who stood up for Jehovah,) His own right arm brought deliverance to Him (from this state of things), and His own righteousness upheld Him. 17. And He put on righteousness as a coat of mail, and the helmet of victory on His head, and the clothing of vengeance for a dress, and clad Himself with zeal like a war cloak, 18. and He will requite them according to their deserts; wrath to His enemies, punishment to His foes; to the inhabitants of the western lands,[3] retribution. 19. And they will fear the name of Jehovah from the going down of the sun, and His majesty from its rising, for He will come (to his enemies), like a flood (that has been pent up), on which the breath of Jehovah blows,[4] 20. but as a Redeemer, to Zion, and to them in Jacob that have turned from their sins, says Jehovah."

Having thus delivered His people, Jehovah will make an everlasting covenant with the true spiritual Israel.

"21. And I—this is My covenant with them, says Jehovah: My Spirit that is upon thee, and My word which I have put in thy mouth,

[1] The note of the turtle-dove is always mournful. It makes a low sound like a sigh, that is very plaintive.

[2] Literally, "with us."

[3] Literally, "islands," or "coasts." Primarily, the nations of Asia Minor who resisted Cyrus, God's agent, but also all the heathen peoples who finally oppose Jehovah.

[4] See Isa. xxx. 27, 28.

shall not depart out of it, nor out of the mouth of thy children, nor out of that of thy children's children, saith Jehovah, from henceforth for ever."

The glory of the new Jerusalem, after the Return, is the subject of a magnificent ode, fitly appended to this rehearsal of the everlasting bond between Jehovah and His true people. In the first stanza the prophet dwells on the return of the exiles.



CHILDREN CARRIED ON THE "SIDE."

"LX. 1. Arise,[1] (Jerusalem), shine (for joy), for thy light has come, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon thee. 2. For, behold (though) darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, Jehovah will shine on thee (like the rising sun) and His glory will shew itself upon thee; 3. and the (heathen) nations will journey to thy light, and kings to the splendour of thy brightness. 4. Lift up thine eyes, round about, and see; the nations all gather together and come to thee, and (with them) thy sons come from far, and thy daughters, borne on their side."[2]

The heathen world will be converted to Jehovah, and offer gifts in His temple, now rebuilt at Jerusalem.

"5. Then wilt thou look on and shine (for joy), and thy heart will throb and swell for gladness, because the wealth of the western lands[3]

[1] **Isa. lx. 1-5.** [2] In the East, children are carried on the mother's hip.
[3] Literally, "sea."

will turn to thee, the riches of the heathen nations will come to thee. 6. Great caravans of camels will cover (thine open spaces)—the young he-camels[1] of Midian, and of Ephah[2] (its related tribe); its people will come from Sheba, bearing gold and incense, and raising songs of praise to Jehovah. 7. All the flocks of Kedar will gather themselves to thee (for offerings to God); the rams of Nebaioth[3] will be at thy service; they will be laid, as well-pleasing sacrifices, on My altar, and I will glorify the House of My glory. 8. Who are these that fly like clouds, and like doves to their dove-towers?[4] 9. Yes! the western lands[5] wait only for a sign from Me; the Tarshish ships[6] first; to bring thy (scattered) sons (O Jerusalem), from afar; their silver and their gold with them, to the name of Jehovah, thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified thee."

The magnificence of the new Jerusalem will be resplendent. Gifts brought from every land will contribute to it, and the alien races around will be made to do the servile work, like the subjugated Canaanites formerly.

"10. And alien races will build thy walls, and their kings will serve thee. For though I smote thee in My wrath, I will have pity on thee in My favour. 11. And thy gates will remain open continually, (so great will be the multitudes passing through them, and so settled thy peace): they will not be shut day nor night, that the (enslaved) hosts of the heathen may be brought into thee, with their kings, in a captive train. 12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; such nations shall be utterly destroyed."

All the wealth of the forest will help to beautify the new temple.

"13. The glory of Lebanon will come to thee, the cypress, the plane tree, and the sherbin-cedar together, to beautify (Jerusalem), the home

[1] Up to nine years old. The finest animals. **Isa. lx. 6-13.**

[2] They lived on the east of the Gulf of Akabah, and conducted a great caravan trade. See Gen. xxv. 2, 4. Winer, *Realw.*, and others.

[3] The tribes south of the Dead Sea. Afterwards the Nabatheans, with a kingdom extending from the Gulf of Akabah to the Hauran.

[4] Schenkel's *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 474. Dovecots like towers, with many small openings for the birds, are common in the East. *Land and Book*, p. 268. Neil's *Palestine*, p. 233. Knobel's *Jesaia*, p. 482. There are over 3,000 in Ispahan.

[5] Literally, "isles," "coasts."

[6] Vol. iii. p. 382-386.

of My sanctuary, and to make the place of My feet (where I rest,—the Holy City) glorious. 14. And the sons of them[1] that (once) afflicted thee will draw near thee, bending low; and all they that despised thee will cast themselves in the dust, at the soles of thy feet; and they will call thee 'The City of Jehovah,' 'Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'"

The prosperity of the restored State will be wonderful.

"15. Instead of being forsaken and hated, with no one passing through thee, I will make thee everlastingly glorious, a delight from generation to generation. 16. Thou shalt suck the milk of the nations, (enjoying their treasures); thou shalt also suck the breast of kings, (receiving their tribute), and thou shalt know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and that thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 17. Instead of copper I will bring (to thee) gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones, iron, and I will make thy rulers Peace, and thy governors Righteousness. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction in thy borders, and thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise. 19. The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light to thee; but Jehovah, (Himself), shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20. Thy sun shall no more go down, nor shall thy moon withdraw itself; for Jehovah shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. 21. Thy people, also, shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, (for they are) a shoot of My planting, the work of My hands, to shew forth (in them) My glory. 22. The smallest (household) shall become a thousand, and the least (clan) shall become a great nation: I, Jehovah, will hasten it in its time."

The opening of the next section of the great prophet was destined, centuries later, to be read and applied to Himself by our Lord, in the synagogue at Nazareth.[2] Although, therefore, spoken, primarily, of the idealized people, now "all righteous," or of the prophet, sent to speak for God, there can be no doubt that the Lord Jesus, the Divine Servant of Jehovah, regarded it as preëminently describing his own relations with the Eternal Father.

[1] Isa. lx. 14-22. [2] Luke iv. 18.

"LXI. 1. The Spirit[1] of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the wretched;[2] He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound (in fetters); 2. to proclaim the year of grace from Jehovah (in the rescue of His people from Babylon), and the day of vengeance of our God (on their oppressors); to comfort all that mourn; 3. to grant favour to them that mourn in Zion, to set on them a crown, instead of the ashes (with which they had strewn their heads); to give them oil of joy (with which to anoint themselves), instead of raiment of mourning; a festal robe instead of a despairing heart—that men may call them terebinths, (stately trees), of righteousness, which Jehovah has planted, to shew forth His glory."

They will rebuild the long-ruined cities of Judah, and be served by the subject races of aliens around, they themselves being greatly exalted by God.

"4. And they will rebuild the ruins of former days; they will restore the desolate places of the past; they will rebuild the towns now destroyed, the places laid waste in past generations. 5. And strangers (of conquered races) shall feed your flocks, and shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers (you, yourselves, no longer needing to toil). 6. But ye shall be called the 'Priests of Jehovah;' men shall call you the 'Servants of our God.' Ye shall eat the riches of the heathen, and exult in the glory formerly theirs. 7. For your shame (in the past) you will receive double (honour and riches), and for the reproach (you have borne), you[3] will rejoice in the portion (given you); thus will you possess double—(the wealth of the soil and the wealth of the heathen); everlasting joy shall be yours.[4] 8. For I, Jehovah, love justice; I hate wicked violence, and will give them their recompense faithfully, and make an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their sons will be known among the nations, their offspring among the peoples; and all who see them will recognize them as a race which Jehovah has blessed."

The "Servant of Jehovah," the personified people of God, or the prophet, now again appears, rejoicing in the promises thus given.

[1] **Isa. lxi. 1-9.**

[2] The idea of bearing their affliction or wretchedness with humility and meekness is implied. [3] Literally, "they." [4] Literally, "theirs."

"10. I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah,[1] my soul will be joyful exceedingly in my God ; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom puts on a priestly turban, and as a bride puts on her jewels. 11. For as the earth shoots forth its green,[2] and as a garden quickens what is sown in it, and makes it spring forth, so the Lord Jehovah will cause your righteousness to shoot forth, and renown, in the eyes of all the nations."

The sixty-second chapter brings a continuation of these promises, and an assurance of their fulfilment. The prophet will not keep silence, or rest, but prays unceasingly to God for the restoration of Jerusalem, and the triumphant flowering of her glory.

"LXII. 1. For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, till her prosperity break forth like the morning light, and her glory like a flaming torch.[3] 2. And the (heathen) nations will see thy prosperity, and all kings thy glory, and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah will appoint ; 3. and thou shalt be a glorious crown in the hand of Jehovah, a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4. Men will no more call thee 'Forsaken,' neither shall thy land any more be called 'Desolation;' but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, ('My delight is in her'), and thy land Beulah, ('Married'): for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

Watchers stand on the ruined walls of Jerusalem, looking out for the approach of the exiles under the leadership of God, who will fulfil all His promises of rebuilding her in splendour.

"6. I have set watchmen on thy (ruined) walls, O Jerusalem; they are never silent, night or day. Be not silent, O ye who keep Jehovah in remembrance (of His promises); 7. give Him no rest, till He establish Jerusalem and make her famous in the earth."

[1] Isa. lxi. 10, 11; lxii. 1-7.
[2] Literally, "sprouting."
[3] See the verse before.

There is no fear of God forgetting His word. On the contrary, He now repeats it in a new form.

"8. Jehovah has sworn by His right hand,[1] and by His mighty arm —Assuredly I will no more give thy corn for food to thine enemies, and aliens shall no more drink thy wine, for which thou hast toiled. 9. No; they that have harvested the corn shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have gathered the grapes will drink the wine in My holy courts."

Those who are supposed to be yet in Palestine are to hasten forth to meet the exiles, and prepare the way before them as they return.

"10. Out, out, through the gates; prepare a (smooth) road for the (returning) people; throw up, throw up a way; clear aside the (loose) stones;[2] lift up a standard (as a guiding beacon) for the tribes! 11. Behold, Jehovah has caused it to be proclaimed aloud, so that even the end of the earth has heard: 'Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, (Jehovah), thy Salvation, cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense, (His restored people), before Him!' 12. And men shall call them 'The Holy People,' 'The Redeemed of Jehovah;' and thou (Jerusalem) shalt be called 'The Sought Out,' 'The City not Forsaken.'"

In the first six verses of the sixty-third chapter Jehovah is represented as having executed fierce vengeance on Edom, and as returning victorious from it. The enemies of the restored Israel, of whom Edom was one of the most bitter, are thus shewn to have been crushed, to secure the peace of the new community, and to exhibit the Divine vengeance on those who had been against it.

[1] **Isa. lxii. 8-12.**

[2] Just before a great prince was expected, a few years ago, the road for forty miles, between Jerusalem and Nablûs -though generally in such a state as to make any by-path preferable—was made perfectly smooth and in good order throughout. The stones were gathered out, the broken-down embankments cast up, and shelving and slippery ledges of rock on the brinks of precipices, covered with a thin coating of earth.

"LXIII. 1. Who is this[1] that comes from Edom, in bright-red garments[2] from Bozrah? This (Great One), splendid in His apparel, swaying to and fro[3] in the fulness of His strength? 'It is I, who speak[4] in righteousness, mighty to save.'

"2. 'Why art Thou red in Thine apparel, and why are Thy garments like his that treads in the wine-press?'

"3. 'I have trodden the wine-press alone; of the peoples there was none with Me, so I trode them in my anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their blood[5] was sprinkled on my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. 4. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my releasing (my exiles) was come. 5. And I looked and there was no helper; I was amazed, but no one came to my aid; and therefore my own arm was my help, and my fury supported me. 6. And I stamped upon the people in my anger, and crushed them to pieces in my fury, and poured out[6] their blood on the earth.'"

From this fierce song of triumph in battle we pass to the still waters of prayer and praise. Thanks, confession, and supplication mingle in a gentle stream which is in striking contrast to what has just preceded. The mighty deeds of Jehovah for His people call for songs of gratitude.

"7. I will celebrate the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah, and His mighty deeds, according to all that He has shewn towards us, and His great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He has shewn them according to His mercy, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. 8. They are, indeed, said He, My people, sons that will not break their plighted troth, and (so) He became their Saviour.[7] 9. In all their troubles (in the wilderness) He also was troubled, and the Angel of His presence saved them;[8] in His love and His long-suffering He, Himself, delivered them, and He nursed and cherished them (in His arms)[9] all the days of old.

[1] **Isa. lxiii. 1–9.**

[2] Warriors had red clothing. Nah. ii. 4. *Cyrop.*, VI. iv. 1. Val. Max., II. vi. 2. See vol. v. p. 116.

[3] "Tossing His head"—Gesenius; others, "bending to and fro."

[4] = Promise.

[5] Literally, "sap."

[6] Literally, "brought down."

[7] He saved them from Egypt.

[8] The pillar of fire and cloud in which Jehovah led them on.

[9] Literally, "bare and carried them." See Isa. xlvi. 3, 4. Exod. xix. 4. Num. xi. 12. Deut. i. 31. The full idea is that given above.

"10. But they rebelled, and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned to be their enemy, and fought against them.[1] 11. Then men remembered the days of old—(the days of Moses)—saying, 'Where is He who led them through the sea after the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put within them His Holy Spirit? 12. He who caused His glorious arm to be at the right hand of Moses, dividing the waters before them,[2] to make Himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the floods (of the Jordan), as a horse on the (smooth) pasture-land, so that they did not stumble? 14. As the ox goes down (from the bare mountain) to the (fertile) valley, so the Spirit of Jehovah brought Israel to his place of rest;[3] so didst Thou guide Thy people, to make Thyself an everlasting name."

Israel now speaks, or, perhaps, the prophet in its name.

"15. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory! Where are (now) Thy zeal and Thy deeds of might, (shewn thus gloriously in ancient days)? The yearning of Thy heart[4] and Thy mercies restrain themselves towards me, (in the long delay of deliverance from Babylon). 16. Thou art truly our Father, for Abraham (is long dead) and knows us not, and (so is) Israel, (our father Jacob), and does not trouble himself about us.[5] Thou, O Jehovah, art our Father; 'Our Redeemer' has from of old been Thy name. 17. Why, O Jehovah, dost Thou make us wander from Thy ways, and harden our heart so that we do not fear Thee (by thus delaying)?[6] Return (to us), for the sake of Thy servants, the

[1] Through Assyria and Babylon especially. **Isa. lxiii. 10–17.**

[2] Knobel refers this clause to cleaving waters out of the rock—but you cleave the rock, not the water.

[3] Canaan.

[4] Literally, "sounding of thy bowels."

[5] Cheyne sees in these clauses a hint of some popular belief in the intercession of the saints of the race for their descendants. He quotes, "Rachel weeping for her children" (Jer. xxxi. 15). But this is surely a mere poetical figure of surpassing grandeur. So also the instance of Lazarus with Dives is only a part of a parable (Luke xvi. 22). In all ages there has been doubtless a hope that the holy dead might plead for the interests of their living friends, or descendants, or fellow-believers; but it seems dangerous, and hardly well-founded, to seek illustrations of this fond hope in the words of Scripture. Cheyne translates the present passage, "Abraham takes no notice of us, and Israel (Jacob) does not recognize us;" but this, we venture to think, is scarcely the most natural interpretation.

[6] For a moment it seems as if Jehovah, by His withdrawing from Israel, were leading it to evil. It is the world-old problem of the origin of evil. Their conduct must have been permitted, they say, by Jehovah; He could have prevented it, and it is the cause of their being chastened.

tribes which are Thine.[1] 18. Thy holy people[2] were in possession[3] (of their land) only for a little while,[4] (and now) our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. 19. We have become as if Thou hadst not ruled over us from of old, as if we had never been called by Thy name!"

The prophet prays that Jehovah would, at last, appear, to crush the oppressor, and deliver His people.

"LXIV. 1. O that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down; (O) that the mountains trembled before Thee: 2. (that they became) as broom[5] which the fire consumes, as water which fire causes to boil—to make known Thy (great) name to Thine adversaries, that the heathen may tremble at Thy presence, 3. when Thou doest terrible things (against them), for which we had not hoped. O that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains trembled at Thy presence! 4. For, from of old, men have not heard, or perceived by the ear, or seen with the eye, a God beside Thee, who did such glorious things for him that trusted in Him. 5. Thou meetest him[6] who rejoices to do righteousness, who thinks of Thy ways. Behold, Thou art wroth, and we (confess that we) have sinned; we are now long in this plight; shall we (yet) be saved?[7] 6. We are all become as the unclean (heathen), and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted cloth, and we have altogether faded like a withered leaf, our iniquities sweep us off, as the wind (carries away the dry leaf). 7. No one calls upon Thy name, no one rouses himself to take hold of Thee, for Thou hast hidden Thy face from us, and givest us up into the power[8] of our iniquities!

"8. Yet, O Jehovah, Thou art our Father: we are the clay, and Thou our potter; we are, all, the work of Thy hand. 9. Be not wroth to the uttermost, O Jehovah, neither remember (our) iniquity for ever! Behold, consider, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people! 10. Thy holy cities have become pastures (for flocks). Zion has become grazing

[1] Literally, "Thy inheritance." [2] People separated by God for Himself.

[3] **Isa. lxiii. 18, 19; lxiv. 1–10.**

[4] Text doubtful. [5] Or, brushwood or stubble.

[6] "O that thou wouldst meet." Ewald and Stier. But this seems opposed to what follows.

[7] A corrupt text. De Wette's rendering is, "Behold Thou wast wroth when we in foretimes sinned in Thy ways, but yet Thou didst save us." The sense in any case is only conjectural. I give the rendering of Delitzsch.

[8] "Hand."

ground, Jerusalem a desert! 11. Our holy [1] and glorious House, in which our fathers praised Thee, has become fuel for fire, and all that was our delight is laid waste. 12. Wilt Thou, in spite of all these things, keep Thyself back, O Jehovah, wilt Thou be silent, and give us up to the sorest affliction?"

To this touching prayer, Jehovah vouchsafes an answer.

"LXV. 1. I have been ready to hear them that did not enquire of Me; I have been near at hand to them who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am,' 'Here I am,' to a nation that did not call upon My name. 2. I spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people, which walked in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts: 3. a people who provoke Me to anger, continually, to My face; who sacrifice in the gardens,[2] and burn incense on (altars of) bricks;[3] who sit in the (rock) tombs, (to get revelations from demons and the dead),[4] and sleep through the night in secret places,[5] to (obtain dreams from the gods);[6] who eat the flesh of swine,[7] and broth of abominations is in their dishes (at their idol feasts); who say, 'Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou' (by these sacrifices, and must not be approached by the 'unclean'). These are smoke in my nose, an ever burning fire; (so glows and smokes My anger against them). 6. Behold, all this (their doing) is written before Me, (so that I cannot forget it). I will not keep silence till I have given them their due, given their due into their bosom.[8] 7. (I will requite) at the same time, says Jehovah, your iniquities (O ye exiles), and the iniquities of your fathers, who burned incense on the mountains, and dishonoured Me upon the hills! Yes! I will measure out their due, first, into their bosom (before I be at peace with them)!"

[1] **Isa. lxiv. 11, 12; lxv. 1-7.** [2] Isa. lvii. 5; i. 29.

[3] The top of the altars was of brick, contrary to the command, Exod. xx. 24, 25. See Isa. lxv. 3. Ovid., *Fast.*, ii. 35. They are here contemptuously called "bricks."

[4] Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14.

[5] Perhaps in artificial or natural caves, where "mysteries" were celebrated. See Jerome, on the text, and also the Septuagint.

[6] Isa. lvii. 5. Chwolson, *Die Ssabaer*, vol. ii. p. 332.

[7] Forbidden by the Law (Isa. lxvi. 17; Lev. xi. 7), especially in a case like this, when the swine were offered in sacrifice. Sacrifices of swine were very common in antiquity. *Spenc. de legg. Hebræor. ritt.*, p. 137. Movers' *Phönizier*, vol. i. pp. 218, ff. *Pausan.*, VI. ii. 2. The Babylonians offered swine. Chwolson,

[8] See vol. v. p. 347.

But though the obstinately ungodly will perish, a remnant of faithful ones will be saved.

"8. Yet, thus says Jehovah:[1] As, when the new wine is in the cluster, men say, 'Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it,' so will I do for the sake of My servants, that I may not destroy them all. 9. I will lead forth from Jacob a seed, and from Judah inheritors of (Canaan), My mountain, and My chosen ones shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell in it. 10. And (the plains of) Sharon[2] (in the west) will be a pasture for sheep and goats, and the valley of Achor[3] a grazing place for cattle, to the people who have sought Me.

"11. But as for you, (among the exiles), who have forsaken (Me), Jehovah; that never think of My holy mountain, but set in order a feast-table to (Baal) Gad—(the god of good fortune)[4] and fill up drink offerings to Meni,[5] (the goddess of destiny): 12. I have appointed you to die by the sword; ye shall all bow yourselves to the slaughter; because I have called and ye have not answered, I have spoken and ye did not give ear, but did evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I had no pleasure. 13. Therefore, thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; 14. behold, My servants shall sing aloud for joy, but ye shall cry out for a broken heart, and wail for sadness of spirit. 15. And ye shall leave your name to My chosen, to be used as a curse by them,[6] for the Lord Jehovah will slay thee. But He will call His servants by another name, 16. so that he who invokes blessings on himself, or the land, will do so by the name of (Jehovah), the faithful God; because the old distresses will be forgotten (amidst the

[1] **Isa. lxv. 8–16.**

[2] The plains of Sharon (Sharon means a plain) extended inland from the coast between Lydda and Carmel. It is a wide sweep of rolling country, suited for either pasture or tillage. The German village of "Sarona," near Joppa, is surrounded by beautiful fields, and settlements equally prosperous flourish near Cæsarea—both on the plain of Sharon.

[3] The valley of Achor is the present Wady Kelt, formerly the north boundary of Judah.

[4] The worship of Bel or Baal is elsewhere charged against the exiles. Isa. lvii. 9. Feasts were part of the Babylonian worship. "Bel and the Dragon." 3. Diod. Sic., ii. 9.

[5] Lenormant speaks of a Babylonian god called "great Manu." Gad may be the Hebrew equivalent of Guttav, the Babylonian name for Jupiter. Sayce, *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. pp. 170–1.

[6] As if they should say, "May your fate be like that of so and so."

glory ye enjoy), and they shall be hidden from My eyes, (so that no repetition of them need be feared)."

This glory of the restored Israel will exceed all that language can describe.

"17. For behold, I (as it were) create new heavens and a new earth,[1] and the former (heaven and earth) will not be remembered or come into mind. 18. (A new state of things will begin) and ye will be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I (thus) create. For, behold, I will make Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. 19. And I (Jehovah, Myself) will rejoice over Jerusalem and joy in My people, and the voice of weeping will be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20. There shall no more be carried out from her (the corpse of) an infant of days, or of an old man who has not filled his course; for he that dies at a hundred years old shall be regarded as a youth, and the sinner (who was wont to be cut off early) shall be struck with the punishment of death when a hundred years old. 21. And they shall build houses and inhabit them, they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. 22. They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat, for the days of My people shall be like the days of a tree, and My chosen ones shall long enjoy the works of their hands. 23. They will not toil for nothing, or bring forth children, (to have them cut off) by sudden trouble, for they will be the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring (will remain) with them. 24. And it will come to pass that before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the food of the serpent. They shall not harm nor destroy in all My holy mountain (of Canaan), says Jehovah."[2]

But the mass of the exiles, in spite of the preaching of the prophets, continued cold and indifferent to spiritual religion, joining heathen practices with the recognition of Jehovah; and while ready to rebuild a temple to Him at Jerusalem, if restored to their own land, remained strangers

[1] Cheyne understands by this, that the prophet expects Nature itself will be regenerated. But when is this to be? Better, surely, understand the words as meaning that the defects and shame of the past will be done away, and a new state of things—holy and happy—introduced. **Isa. lxv. 17-25.** [2] Isa. xi. 6-9. Gen. iii. 14

to true religion. The last chapter of Isaiah, therefore, opens with a passage recalling the language of other prophets and of some of the Psalms, in its depreciation of merely formal worship, and its demands for a broken heart and contrite spirit as the sacrifices most acceptable to God.[1] If Jehovah accepted a temple at their hands at all, they are to understand that it is not because He required it, or regarded it as an adequate honour, but only in accommodation to their weakness and human needs. Sacrifices offered by others than the contrite are worthless and even hateful to Him, though He accepts those presented by the truly worthy.[2]

"LXVI. 1. Thus says Jehovah:[3] The heavens are My throne and the earth is My footstool.[4] What kind of house would ye build for Me? What manner of place for My rest? 2. For all these (the heavens and the earth), has My hand made; thus they all rose into being, says Jehovah. But on this man will I look; on him who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word."

Sacrifices offered by the ungodly are an abomination, even when they are such as the Law prescribes.

"3. He that slaughters an ox (I will not say 'sacrifices'), if he be not My true worshipper, is (hateful to Me) as one that kills a man; he that sacrifices a sheep is no better than if he broke a dog's neck, (and offered Me the unclean beast[5]); he that presents a meal offering is no better than if he offered Me swine's blood;[6] he that burns incense is no better than if he bowed to an idol. As they have chosen their own ways and their soul has delighted in their abominations, 4. so I will choose calamities[7] for them and bring their fears upon them, because I called and no one answered, I spoke and no one gave ear, but they did what was evil in My eyes, and chose that in which I had no pleasure."

[1] Ps. li. 17. Isa. lvii. 15. Ps. xxxiv. 18. Ps. l. 8–15.
[2] Isa. chaps. lvi. and lx.; lxvi. 20. See also Jeremiah and Ezekiel, *passim*.
[3] **Isa. lxvi. 1-4.** [4] 1 Kings viii. 27. 2 Chron. vi. 18. [5] Eccles. ix. 4.
[6] **Lev. xi. 7.** [7] Literally, "freaks (of fortune)."

Judgment will be let loose on these mockers. The prophet already hears, in spirit, the cry of their punishment, from the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

"5. Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at His speech.[1] Your brethren that hate you, (the heathen and ungodly among the exiles), and that cast you out for My name's sake, (telling you to be gone to Palestine), have said (in contemptuous derision), 'Let Jehovah glorify Himself, that we may see your joy!'

"But they will be brought to shame, (for, lo, I hear) 6. a sound of tumult[2] from the city (Jerusalem), a sound from the Temple, the sound of Jehovah, who renders their deserts to His enemies!"

The return of the exiles, and the restoration of Jerusalem, will be effected with marvellous suddenness by Jehovah, and, as He has already promised, He will turn to the holy city the wealth of the heathen.

"7. Before she (Jerusalem) travailed, she brought forth; before her pains came she was delivered of a man-child![3] 8. Who has heard anything like this? Who has seen anything like it? Were the whole people of a country ever brought forth in a day, or was a nation ever born at once?[4] But as soon as Zion travails, a nation, her restored children, will at once be born. 9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? says Jehovah; shall I who bring to the birth, hinder its being completed? says thy God; (having done so much, will I not not perfect My work?)"

The prospect demands rejoicing from all among the exiles who love Jerusalem.

"10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice greatly with her, all ye that mourn for her (present

[1] **Isa. lxvi. 5-10.** [2] Literally, "crushing."

[3] Gesenius quotes an Arab proverb, "Sweeter than the birth of a boy." He says that the Arabs in old times used to bury female infants alive. *Jesaia*, vol. ii. p. 300. Laurence Oliphant speaks of a mother pitching her baby into the road, when she found it was a girl: the poor creature being thus made a cripple for life. He saw the child limping about, and learned the cause, on inquiry. Harper was told by an old Bedouin midwife, that mothers would not let girls live, and got her to twist their necks when they were born. [4] The sudden repeopling of Jerusalem looked like this.

desolation), 11. that ye may drink from the full breasts of her consolations and be satisfied; that ye may drink eagerly, and delight yourselves from the dropping fulness of her glory.[1] 12. For thus says Jehovah, Behold, I will cause peace to stream[2] through her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing flood, and then ye shall suck (the rich plenty of her bosom), ye shall be borne on the sides of the nations, like children,[3] and dandled on their knees. 13. As one[4] whom his mother comforteth (in need and pain), so will I comfort you; yes, in Jerusalem shall ye be comforted. 14. And when ye see (all your prosperity), your heart will rejoice, and your bones be vigorous as young grass, for the Hand of Jehovah will make itself known in His servants, but He will deal fiercely with His enemies."

Now follows the judgment to be thus executed.

"15. For, behold, Jehovah will come in fire, with His chariots, like the rushing storm, to turn His anger in fury (on His enemies), and His chastisement in flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by sword will Jehovah hold judgment with all flesh, and those slain by Him will be many. 17. They that purify and consecrate themselves to enter the gardens (where idols are worshipped), following the officiating priest,[5] (or standing behind the Asherah); that eat swine's flesh and other unclean abominations, and even the field-mouse,[6] shall be destroyed together, says Jehovah. 18. For I (will punish) their works and their thoughts; and the time will come when I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall assemble and see My glory. 19. And I will work (great judgments on my enemies), as a sign (of My power and majesty), and I will send those of them that escape, (as messengers) to the heathen nations—to Tarshish, Phut, and Lud, that draw the bow; to Tubal, and Javan, and the far-off coasts and islands of the Western

[1] Knobel translates the clause, "and renew your youth from the increase of her glory." **Isa. lxvi. 11-19.**

[2] Literally, "turn."

[3] Isa. lx. 4. Children are very often carried on the hips, sitting astride. See p. 351.

[4] Literally, "a man."

[5] This is a paraphrase of a difficult clause. It seems most in keeping with the text. Some, however, think they walked after the image of some god or goddess. On the festival of Istar or of Tammuz, the figure of the god was borne in procession, adorned with jewels and robes of rich material, attended by her maids of honour, "Pleasure" or "Lust," and they went in procession to meet the mourners bearing the body of the dead Tammuz. St. Chad Boscawen, from a cuneiform record. *Academy*, vol. xiv. p. 91.

[6] The ancients fattened and ate this creature. It was unclean. Perhaps the jerboa is meant in the text. It is still eaten by the Arabs. **Lev. xi. 29.**

Sea, that have not heard of My great doings nor seen My glory—and they shall make known among the heathen My majesty. 20. And,[1] as a gift to Jehovah, these heathen nations will bring all your brethren, (scattered among them), out of all the nations, on horses, and in chariots and litters, and on mules and dromedaries, to My holy mountain, to Jerusalem, says Jehovah, as the children of Israel used to bring the meal-offering in a clean vessel, to the House of Jehovah; 21. and I will take some of them, also, for priests and for Levites, says Jehovah.[2] 22. For as the new heaven and the new earth which I will make, shall remain for ever before Me, says Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain, (O Israel). 23. And it shall come to pass that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before Me (in Jerusalem), says Jehovah.

"24. And (when they come, thus,) they will go forth (from the city) and look on the carcasses of the men that rebelled against Me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be a horror to all flesh."

[1] **Isa. lxvi. 20-24.**

[2] He will not restrict Himself to the tribe of Levi or the sons of Aaron. Members of the returned "dispersion" will be taken for the holy offices.

CHAPTER XVI.

REDEMPTION DRAWING NIGH.

THE utterances of the prophets of the Exile bring vividly before us the condition of their brethren during the Captivity. Their treatment seems to have varied in different localities and at different times, but, at least in the earlier years, the iron of slavery entered deeply into their souls. They seem to have been settled in colonies here and there, over the land, working at all forms of bond service, but allowed free intercourse with each other, and retaining their distinct organization and customs, to a great extent, as in Judæa. Continued restlessness and plotting, however, brought heavy punishment on their royal family and leading priests and nobles, in the beginning of the Exile.[1] Contempt and hatred, moreover, seem to have been lavished on a race so intractable, culminating not unfrequently in the dungeon, or even in death.[2] They are spoken of as often robbed and spoiled, snared in pits, and hidden in prisons.[3] Pitiless cruelty,[4] unrestrained by law,[5] was too common, though, as a whole, their position was so favourable, that very few would, in the end, leave Babylonia, when free to do so, but, in spite of the exhortations of the prophets, made it their permanent home.

[1] Isa. xliii. 28; xlvii. 6. Jer. lii. 11.
[2] Isa. xiv. 3.
[3] Isa. xlii. 22.
[4] Isa. xlvii. 6.
[5] Isa. li. 13. Jer. l. 7-17. Ps. cxxiv., cxxix., cxxxvii.

Gradually, however, things improved. The harsh treatment of the earlier years of the Exile more or less died away, for the Babylonians and Jews were of the same stock, and spoke closely allied dialects of the same language, while they were indistinguishable in their Semitic features. Many obtained their freedom, and, both in town and country, grew daily, alike in feeling and in the eyes of the community, recognized members of the general population.[1] Not a few Hebrews, moreover, ere long, shewed that instinctive national genius for commerce and public affairs, which has made the Jew, in all lands, the middleman in every industry ; the banker, the money-lender, the great merchant, or the petty tradesman ; but always the more than successful rival of the native-born population, on whose resources he levied a heavy toll, by his shrewdness, his tenacity, his capacity for work, his Oriental courtesy, apt to degenerate into servility, and, it must be owned, his only too general want of principle, if it in any degree threatened his gains. As, to-day, the Jew is, through Europe, a controlling power on the exchange, in the negotiation of loans, great and small, on the press, in the law, in commerce, and even in many petty industries ; as he has given England a D'Israeli, Austria a Metternich, many capitals a Rothschild ; as he gave Egypt a Joseph, and Babylon a Daniel, he doubtless came to the front, long before the Exile ended, in many ways, equally varied and equally weighty, in the lands on the Euphrates. The race had, moreover, from the first, enjoyed the advantage of being collected in groups from the same localities in the fatherland. The exiles from Gibeon, Bethlehem, Anathoth, and many other places, found them-

[1] Ps. cvi. 46.

selves among old neighbours and friends,[1] and the Babylonian authorities had even been considerate enough, to transfer each of the family groups and connections of the chief houses of Jerusalem, as a whole, to the same district, so that we find the descendants of David, of Joab, and other Judæan patricians, living in free intercourse and close neighbourhood in Babylonia.[2] Even the poor Nethinim, the slaves owned by the Temple, and the public slaves known as "bond servants of Solomon," had been set down in communities of their own.[3] Still more, permission to hold land and vineyards, and to follow trade or gain, appears to have been granted after a time, and hence, at least in later years, many of the exiles possessed not only slaves, but horses, mules, camels,[4] and asses, though the mass had still, necessarily, to support themselves by humble labour,[5] and not a few remained slaves to Babylonians, or even to their brother Jews. A very curious glimpse of the state of things thus found, in those days, among this class of Hebrews, has come to light through the revelations of the tablets recovered from Babylonia. In the great library of Sippara, or Sepharvaim, now Abu Hubba, on a canal branching eastward from the Euphrates, about thirty miles southeast of Bagdad, thousands of tablets, recording fiscal, legal, and commercial transactions were found. They were preserved in the temple of the Sun, then brought to light, shewing that documents of value were, to a large extent, entrusted to the keeping of the priests, in the sacred chambers of their sanctuaries, which, it was assumed, no one would dare to invade. In one such

[1] See the list in Ezra ii. with the parallel in Neh. vii. 26.
[2] See the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.* Isa. lxvi. 20. Ezra ii. 64–67.
[5] Jos., *Ant.*, XVIII. ix. 1.

room over thirty thousand tablets were discovered, so carefully laid away, that, having been removed without disturbing their arrangement, most of them, when unpacked in England, proved to be in exact chronological order, from B.C. 600 to B.C. 200; many of them having thus lain undisturbed, and without injury from time, for nearly 2,500 years.

The Babylonian priests, like the Jewish, and, indeed, like our own old Church courts till the Reformation, were not only ecclesiastics, but lawyers and judges; carrying on many branches of legal business in their courts. Some reports of cases decided by these tribunals have been found among the treasures brought to England from the Sippara library, or record office, and, of these, a number have been translated. Among others, one proves to be a report of the proceedings in a case, where a Jew sought, about the year B.C. 570, in the middle of the Exile, to prove himself entitled to his freedom—he having previously been a slave. The story as we now read it, is as follows: One Barachiel—the same name as the father of Elihu, in Job[1]—had originally been the slave of a wealthy man, called Akni-miri, who, about B.C. 570, had sold him to a widow, named Gaga. In the house of this lady he remained, as her slave, for twenty-one years, with the power of buying his freedom, if he ever, by his own permitted earnings, gained the sum demanded for it.

This amount, however, he never was able to get together, and consequently remained Gaga's property. As such, she gave him in pledge for some debt, and having received him again, on its being paid, finally made him over to her daughter, on the young lady's marriage, as part of her

[1] Job xxxii. 2-6.

dowry. The daughter, in her turn, gave him to her husband and son, in exchange for a house and some slaves, so that he must have been of special value: slaves being, often, physicians, librarians, scribes, or mechanics. The mother, Gaga, and the daughter, both dying, he was sold, presumably by the husband and son, who, thus, could not have had him fully transferred to them before, but had, as it were, held him as a pledge, a living mortgage, for the house and the slaves made over to the daughter. This time, he was sold to a wealthy publican—presumably a sub-farmer of the taxes—but he would not stay with him, and ran off twice. When caught, after the second escape, he had the courage to begin an action, claiming to be a free-born citizen, of a family he named. To prove this, he pretended that he had performed the marriage rites, at the wedding of his master's daughter, with a certain person named, which he could not have done had he been a slave, or even a freed-man, since all priests—and he had, he said, acted as one—were of free birth. He even went the length of maintaining that he was descended from one of the half-fabulous heroes, who gave their names to the noble families of Babylon, and that he was one of the house of a high priest, whom he named.

The royal judges before whom his case was brought, hereupon asked him to prove that he was of free birth, as he claimed to be, and, in the end, Barachiel, with all his Hebrew craft, was obliged to confess that his statements had been false. He could not rebut the evidence brought against him, and though it is probable that he had taken the precaution of naming parties already dead, as those whom he had joined in marriage, other witnesses appeared, who proved that he was a slave who had the right, on cer-

tain conditions, of purchasing his freedom, and so, poor fellow, he had to go back to his servitude.[1]

The general condition of the exiles, however, notwithstanding such cases as this, must have been, on the whole, at least as the Exile drew to a close, far from one of unmixed suffering or discomfort, since a very small number of them were willing to leave the Euphrates for Palestine, when Cyrus gave permission to return to it. Indeed, so few and inconsiderable were the emigrants to their old land, that their brethren remaining in Babylonia had to contribute yearly to their maintenance, for generations, while the wealth, the purity of blood, and the numbers of the Hebrew population who made the region of the Captivity their permanent home, were so striking and indisputable, that even the Palestine Jews always spoke reverently of them, as the kernel of the wheat, of which they themselves were only the inferior outside flour. Babylonia, in fact, as has been said, and may hereafter be shewn more fully, continued to be the true capital and headquarters of Judaism, far more than Jerusalem, and remained so till late into the middle ages.

Growing contentment with their new home, and the abatement of enthusiasm for Judæa which time brought with it, must, therefore, by degrees, have made life more pleasant for the exiles. The language of Babylonia, moreover, was so closely related to Hebrew, and its use was so easy, that it ultimately supplanted the latter, thus introducing once more among the descendants of their great ancestor Abraham, his long-disused dialect, and leaving that of Palestine, which had been for ages adopted in its place, to become obsolete. Ezekiel and Daniel shew this

[1] Dr. Oppert in *Records of the Past*, N. S., vol. ii. 155, ff.

change ; part of their writings being in Aramaic or "Chaldee." Still more, the ability and virtues, and even the beauty of not a few, from the first, as I have said, won notice for them in the highest quarters, as in the instances of Daniel and his companions, and, at a later period, in those of Nehemiah and Queen Esther.

The short reign of Evil Merodach, B.C. 562–560,[1] brought still brighter times to the exiles. Jehoiachin, who had lain in a dungeon for thirty-seven years, was at last set free, and seated at the table of the Great King, clothed in royal robes. Shut up at the age of eighteen, and now a man of fifty-five, we can scarcely doubt that his restored influence was exerted on behalf of his brethren, who, through all his sufferings, had loyally clung to him as their king. But two years later, the weak and effeminate son of Nebuchadnezzar was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who held the throne from B.C. 560 to B.C. 557, when he was succeeded by his son, a minor, who perished within nine months by a conspiracy of the nobles. One of these, Nabonidus, as has already been said,[3] gained the vacant throne, and held it from B.C. 556 to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in B.C. 538—a period of eighteen years. It was Belshazzar, the eldest son of this king, who was slain when the city was taken—his father having raised him to a share of the throne some time before. An inscription recently translated informs us, moreover, that he had a separate establishment, with his own scribes, etc., during the reign of his father ; a major-domo managing it for him, with authority over its body of field and household slaves, its grounds, its internal arrangements, and all else. The

[1] Schrader. 562–560, Birch. 561–560, Volck, in new edition of Herzog. See, also, this vol. p. 288. [2] Or Nabunahid. [3] P. 289.

prince appears to have been zealous in the service of the gods, in contrast to his father, who neglected them. Details of an offering presented by him in the year B.C. 550—the sixth year of his father's reign—survive. We find traces of his having two brothers, one of whom, unwilling to sink into obscurity, ventured to revolt, in the reign of Darius Hystaspis, in the vain hope of regaining the throne of his ancestors.[1]

The whole number of the exiles was by no means great. There had been about a million souls in Judah and Benjamin in the time of David, not including the Levites, and the increase in the four centuries since must have been large. But not more than perhaps 100,000 were carried off into captivity. Many had fled to Egypt, and numbers of the peasantry remained in the land, so that those taken to Babylon were at best only a feeble remnant.[2] Among them, however, were the noblest of the race, from whom, as from a root, the nation, cut down so low, would one day spring up again. In them Judah had her last centre of organized public life. The flower of the princes, patricians, and priests of Judah, of its skilled mechanics and once substantial burgesses, had been transplanted to the Euphrates in numbers sufficient to secure in due time the regeneration of the State.

But the calamities of the nation wrought little moral improvement in the bulk of the exiles. Idolatry, to which they had long been accustomed in Palestine, flourished among them in Babylonia, as is strikingly shewn in the

[1] *Babyl. Record*, ii. 18.

[2] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. iii. 10, has the strange error in the text of making those who returned to Palestine 4,628,000 persons from twelve years old, upwards. Cohen (*Les Pharisiens*, vol. i. p. 3), quotes this as the estimate by Josephus of the Jewish population in Babylon, but it is clearly a mistake of some copyist, as it refers to those who returned, and the right number is given elsewhere.

closing chapters of Isaiah. The chief men treated their brethren with the same cruel harshness so often rebuked by the prophets in Judah; oppressing dependents, crushing the poor by extortion, perverting the law to their own benefit, and, finally, neglecting those whom their wickedness had reduced to misery. It seemed as if all hope of a national restoration had perished; as if nothing remained of a people once so haughty, but the dry, unburied bones. But the very depth of the evils endured led to good. Some, as we have seen, learned in their wretchedness to seek the God of their fathers. Such listened eagerly to the promises of the prophets that they would return to Palestine, and pondered the sacred writings. The priests of the line of Zadok, always untainted with idolatry, had brought with them from Judah the Books of the Law; not a few faithful souls cherished the utterances of the prophets, handed down from the past; the Levites jealously preserved such of the Psalms as had as yet been composed; the so-called "wise" pondered over the collection of sacred proverbs, and books of religious philosophy like Job; and the chroniclers busied themselves with some of the national historical records. Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets, became, in their written oracles, the "wells of salvation" to the religiously disposed. The "songs of Zion" rose again on the banks of the Chebar, and in every Jewish colony in Babylonia. A more thoughtful earnestness spread daily. Men read in the inspired records multiplied proofs of the truth of their ancient faith.[1]

Meanwhile, the course of events strengthened the Jewish communities. More than a century before, the Ten

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 16.

Tribes had been carried off by Assyria; but on the destruction of Nineveh numbers of them had joined themselves to the exiles from Judah,[1] and thus increased the confidence of the godly in the restoration of the State, since this reunion was itself a fulfilment of prophecy. Deep penitence for the past, and determination to be true to Jehovah, henceforth increased.[2] The four calamitous days of their recent history—that of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, in the tenth month; the day on which the city was taken, in the fourth month; the day of its final destruction in the fifth month; and that of the murder of Gedaliah, in the tenth month—were set apart as solemn fasts and times of lamentation.[3] A religious revival extended from the common people to some of the higher classes.[4] A habit of observing fixed hours for prayer became common. The time of the incense offering, morning and evening, had long been so sacred to devotion,[5] that the word "incense" became at last the equivalent of prayer.[6] Those "who feared Jehovah" accustomed themselves to meet often together for supplication and religious counsel;[7] usually, it would seem, as in later ages, by the sides of flowing streams, where water could easily be had for purifications.[8] The face, moreover, was always turned in prayer towards the site of the ruined Temple, as the spot where God had once been nearest to man.[9] Noon was added to morning and evening as a time for supplication.[10] Devotion, from these years,

[1] 1 Chron. ix. 3. Neh. vii. 34; xi. 4. Jer. l. 4, 20; li. 5.
[2] Isa. lxvi. 2, 5. Ezra x. 3.
[3] Zech. vii. 3; viii. 19. Isa. lxi. 3; lxvi. 10. Ps. lxix. 11.
[4] Isa. lvi. 4. [5] Ps. cxli. 2, 3, 5. [6] Rev. viii. 3.
[7] Mal. iii. 16. [8] 3 Macc. vii. 20. Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. x. 23. Acts xvi. 13.
[9] Dan. vi. 10. We see the practice already in 1 Kings viii. 48.
[10] Dan. vi. 11. See Ps. lv. 17.

gained a prominence it had never enjoyed before. The house of prayer became a substitute for the Temple,[1] and not a few penitential Psalms seem to have been composed for its services.

While numbers of Jews from the Ten Tribes found a rallying-point, after the fall of Assyria, among the exiles in Babylonia, the national sentiment was flattered, and loyalty to the ancient faith intensified, by the spectacle of many heathen proselytes accepting the Hebrew creed.[2] The perusal of copies of portions of the sacred writings can hardly have helped this, for the language in which the Jewish Scriptures were written was not familiar to many Babylonians. It must have been the result, in most cases, of the earnest efforts of the godly among the exiles, anxious to atone for their past indifference, by spreading the glory of Jehovah. The fact that not a few Jews, like Daniel, were in prominent positions, and the constant tendency to a closer intimacy in the affairs of ordinary life, doubtless aided this missionary enthusiasm. Moreover, the generation born in Babylonia must have felt much more kindly towards it and its people than their fathers had done. Some of them, indeed, even assumed Chaldæan names, as in the case of Zerubbabel, who was also known as Sheshbazzar,[3] and that of Mordecai, which is a Babylonian, or possibly a Persian word. In such circumstances, the immeasurable superiority of the Jewish faith over idolatry could readily be urged on the more thoughtful of the heathen around. The poor especially, among these, if we may judge from the experience of early Christianity, supplied adherents to the true faith; the humbler Jews mixing freely with them,

[1] Isa. lvi. 7. [2] Isa. lvi. 6.
[3] Ezra i. 8, 11; v. 16. 1 Esd. ii. 12, 15.

and winning their favourable regard. Once gained, these proselytes kept the Sabbath and honoured the Law, perhaps even to the length of submitting to circumcision;[1] and their adhesion reacted on the Jews themselves, kindling in them a still greater pride in their creed, and loyalty to it.

But if some Jews learned in exile to value their religion aright, too many became tainted by the heathen influences around them. Babylon was the London of its day, with a similar gigantic commerce and huge confluence of visitors from all lands, for business, pleasure, or religion. Immorality brought no shame. The very temples derived a large revenue from prostitution in their grounds. Harlots were, in fact, part of their recognized establishment, and it was even a law that every woman should offer herself at least once in this way, in the service of the gods. Naturally, the mass of the exiles caught the infection of so impure a worship. Babylonian idols were honoured in Jewish households, many of which further disregarded the Law by feasts on unclean creatures offered to these gods.[2] Jerusalem was forgotten, and the idea of a return to Palestine treated with scorn.[3] Large numbers became virtually Babylonians, and laughed at the fanaticism of their brethren who longed for Palestine. Vice and wickedness of all kinds flourished.[4] It was clear that the Return, when it came, would drain off most of the clear wine of the nation that remained, and leave behind it a vast body of lees.[5]

The prophet Hosea had foretold that Israel would need to be led once more into the wilderness, to quicken her

[1] Isa. lvi. 6.
[2] Isa. lxv. 3–8; lxvi. 17.
[3] Isa. lxiv. 11.
[4] Isa. lix. 1–15.
[5] In the generations after the Return, there was a great revival among those Jews who remained in Babylonia. They became as zealous for the Law and the Temple as their brethren in Judah.

again to fidelity to Jehovah, and exile beyond the Eastern desert had fulfilled the prediction. The wails of the Psalms and prophets of the time only expressed the inextinguishable sorrow of the better class of the banished. The sword, the dungeon, the lash; hunger, nakedness, scorn, as already noted, had marked the first days, at least, of the Exile. Of the multitude that left Judah, numbers had perished on the way.[1] To the survivors—so far as they were zealous for Jewish peculiarities—life among the unclean must have been a perpetual agony, from the deadly peril at every moment of breaking the Law by heathen defilements. Even pulse was preferable to the dainties of the royal table under such circumstances.[2] The hundred-and-second Psalm, which dates from the closing years of the Exile, brings the times vividly before us. The weary servants of God, longing for the promised Return, poured forth, in its strains, the grief weighing on their hearts.

"CII. 1. Hear my prayer,[3] O Jehovah: let my cry come before Thee. 2. Hide not Thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline Thine ear unto me: in the day when I call, hear me speedily. 3. For my days vanish away like smoke: my bones are burned (with fever), like a glowing hearth. 4. My heart is withered and dried up like grass, till I have forgotten to eat my bread. 5. Through my loud groaning my bones cleave to my skin.[4] 6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness,[5] I am become like an owl amidst ruins, (so forlorn am I and desolate). 7. I pass the night sleepless, and, (while others sleep), I am like a lonely wakeful bird on the house-top. 8. My enemies speak contemptuously of me all the day long; they that rage against me make their oaths by me.[6] 9. For I have eaten ashes like bread,[7] and mingled

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 27. [2] Ezek iv. 12–15. Dan. i. 5–16. [3] **Ps. cii. 1–9.**
[4] Literally, "flesh." He was only skin and bones. [5] Both unclean birds.
[6] *i.e.*, "God make thee like him—forsaken and wretched." Isa. lxv. 15. Jer. xxix. 22.
[7] As a mourner he sat in ashes and strewed them on his head (Job ii. 8; Ezek. xxvii. 30), and thus his bread was mixed with them.

my drink with weeping, 10. because of Thy indignation and Thy wrath; for Thou hast lifted me up (from my native land), and cast me forth. 11. My days are like a long stretched out shadow (soon to be all darkness), and I am dried up like (withered) grass.

"12. But thou, O Jehovah, sittest throned for ever, and Thy glory is from generation to generation. 13. Thou shalt arise to have pity on Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. 14. For Thy servants love even her (ruined) stones, and her very dust. 15. For the heathen shall (one day) fear the name of Jehovah, and all the kings of the earth (be awed at) Thy glory, (O God), 16. when (it is said) 'Jehovah hath rebuilt Zion, He has appeared in His glory; 17. He has regarded the prayer of the wretched and not despised their supplication.' 18. This will be written for the generation to come, and people yet to be created will praise Jehovah, 19. because He will look down from His holy height; Jehovah will look down from heaven, on the earth; 20. to hear the groans of the prisoner, to set loose those doomed to death; 21. that men may extol the name of Jehovah in Zion, and praise Him in Jerusalem, 22. when the nations and kingdoms gather together, to serve Jehovah.

"23. He has bowed down the strength of my life; He has shortened my days. 24. My God, said I, take me not away in the midst of my days—Thou, whose years are from generation to generation! 25. Of old Thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. 26. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; they all grow old like a garment; Thou changest them like a vesture and they change, 27. but Thou remainest the same, and Thy years have no end. 28. The children of Thy servants will have rest, and their descendants will continue before Thee."[2]

The intense devotion to Jerusalem and Jehovah breathed in this Psalm, marks the change wrought in the better class of the exiles by the Captivity. It broke the charm idolatry had hitherto exercised. Henceforward, through all the future, they and their descendants were fierce monotheists. Their national shame and suffering were

[1] **Ps. cii. 10-28.**

[2] The date proposed by some for this Psalm—Nehemiah's time, before the walls were rebuilt—seems to me less satisfactory than that of the Exile. The groans of the prisoner, and the sorrows of those doomed to death (verse 20), suit Babylon more naturally than the colony on Mount Zion.

recognized as the punishment of the heathen practices of their fathers, and changed them for ever into worshippers of Jehovah alone, as the fires of Smithfield made Englishmen Protestants.[1] The loathing and bitterness with which the prophets denounce image-worship became the feeling of the whole Jewish race. In the apocryphal Letter of Jeremiah, though it is of later date,[2] the idolatry of Babylon is painted, for the execration of all, in the most vivid detail. The gods of silver, gold, and wood, are described as seen in the great religious processions, borne on men's shoulders, their whole surface plated with gold and silver, golden crowns on their heads, and gorgeous robes around them.

"Yet," says the writer, "they cannot save themselves from rust and moths, though clad in purple; and men have to wipe the dust off their faces. They stand in their temples with sword and battle-axe in their hands, but they cannot defend themselves from violence or thieves. The doors need locks and bars to keep such gods safe; and though lamps are lit for them, they cannot see. Their faces are blackened with the smoke (of incense and lamps), and bats and swallows (that fly through the open temple), and cats (that creep through), sit on their bodies and heads."

The hideous impurity associated with the worship; the Levitical uncleanness of the worshippers; the unclean food set before the idols; the "roaring and shouting" of the priests, in their ministrations; their rent clothes and shaven heads and beards, are all detailed for contemptuous ridicule, and even the dishonesty of the priests is noticed.[3]

Such was the attitude towards idolatry brought about finally and for ever by the Exile. But it had also the grand result of leading men to set increasing value on the

[1] Stanley, vol. iii. p. 31.

[2] Schürer says only, that it is of Greek origin.

[3] Baruch, chap. vi., *passim*. See also "Bel and the Dragon," and the Song of the Three Children.

spiritual services of religion, as contrasted with the merely ritual. Though without prince, prophet, leader, burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, incense, or place of sacrifice, men now hoped to be accepted when they knelt with a contrite heart and a humble spirit before the Unseen God.[1]

How far the later theology and morality of Judaism were due to the studies and influences of the Exile is not easy to say, since the schools of Alexandria, after a time, largely coloured Hebrew thought. But it is certain that the Jew after the Captivity was a different man from his forefathers. The teaching of "Daniel" respecting angels, is an advance on what is previously revealed. We read for the first time of "Michael, the Prince of Israel," of the "Prince of Persia," and of the "Prince of Greece."[2] The earliest distinct announcement of the resurrection of the dead appears also in that book;[3] and in the mysterious Son of Man, who came to the Ancient of Days,[4] there seems to be a disclosure of the Divine personality of the expected Messiah—the "Word of God" of later Judaism, and the "Word made flesh" of St. John. It must be remembered, however, that the book of Daniel, in its present form, is recognized by all scholars to be the result of revision and expansion, we know not how extensive, at a very late period. The stress laid on the burial of the dead and on almsgiving in Tobit,[5] and in the Apocryphal literature generally, appears, also, to be a gleam of light from the days when heaven brightened as the earth grew dark round the exiles. Nor is it possible to overlook the change from traditional exclusiveness, shewn by the enthusiasm to bring aliens, by proselytism, into the communion of Israel. The closing

[1] Song of the Three Children, ver. 14, 15.
[2] Dan. x. 13, 21; xii. 1.
[3] Dan. xii. 2.
[4] Dan. vii. 13.
[5] Tobit iv. 3–20, etc.

chapters of Isaiah embody the wider sympathies of times when contact with the great world extended the views and enlarged the sympathies of the nation. The isles of the west, including the Mediterranean coasts, as far as Tarshish on the Atlantic coast of Spain, and the countless races, as far east as China, "the land of the Sinim,"[1] are all eagerly expected to join with the Jew in a common worship on the Temple mountain.

It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the Exile was the period in which the guardianship, transcription, and study of the sacred books first became the special care of a distinct class, afterwards famous as the great order of the Scribes. Shut out from former privileges, and forced to hope in the future rather than look to the present, the earnest Jew concentrated on his sacred writings, the devotion hitherto felt for the Temple and its services. The writings of the prophets were collected, and the story of the past in part, at least, recorded by the aid of ancient documents. The Books of Kings, by the internal evidence of their last statements, date from this age of national depression, and we owe to it, probably, besides, the collection of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the preservation of other portions of the Bible. Withdrawn for a time into scenes of humiliation and trouble, and thus purified, the Jews brought back again to their own land the

[1] By "the land of Sinim" we are to understand "the land of the Sinim;" the word being in the plural. From the connection in Isa. xlix. 12, where it is used, some country either in the far south or in the east must be intended, but the east appears to suit best, as a contrast to the west, mentioned before in the verse. The opinion that China and the Chinese are meant seems most probable. There was a Chinese province called Tsin, on the Hoangho, when this portion of Isaiah was written, but this name, it seems, was not in use west of China in that age. But the Chinese are known to have had trade relations with the West, at least as early as the tenth century before Christ, so that the reference seems certainly to be to them. See art. "Sinim" in Riehm.

rich treasure of their sacred writings, of which the discipline they had borne qualified them to be the watchful guardians.

The last twenty years before the release of the Hebrews from Babylon must have been a time of feverish excitement through all Western Asia, and especially among the exiles. When the mighty Nebuchadnezzar was just closing his career, a movement, destined to change the history of the world, had begun in the mountains beyond the Southern Tigris. The leader under whom this great political revolution was accomplished, was the Cyrus of Isaiah, originally king of Elam, but, ultimately, after he conquered Media, king of Persia also. He could trace his descent back to a member of the royal Persian clan, "Teispes," which seems to have ruled over Elam after the fall of Assyria;[1] his Persian dominions being handed over to his son, the great-grandfather of Darius Hystaspes. Cyrus himself gives his titles, even in his later years, as king of Babylon, Sumir, or Shinar, Accad, and Elam, only once mentioning Persia.[2] The Persian empire was founded by Darius Hystaspis, though the title of king of Persia is used by Ezra[3] of Cyrus, as that which he himself adopted in his later years.

Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, king of Elam, and, as is said, of Mandane, daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes, who was himself the son of King Cyaxares, whose daughter Nebuchadnezzar had married after the fall of Assyria.[4] Elam was at this time apparently a vassal of Media, paying it tribute; but Cyrus overthrew Astyages and made him

[1] This appears to have been the conquest of Elam alluded to in Jer. xliv. 34–39.

[2] Cylinder of Cyrus. Isaiah mentions only Elam and Media, not Persia, as invading Babylonia, chap. xxi. 1–10.

[3] Ezra i. 2.

[4] See vol. v. p. 248. Prof. Sayce questions the relation of Cyrus to Astyages. Smith's *Babylonia*, p. 172. But it is accepted by Dr. F. Justi, *Gesch. des alt. Persiens*. Pinches thinks the war against Media began later, about B.C. 552.

self king of Media, in B.C. 558. Fortunate in securing an alliance with the king of Armenia, another vassal of Media, he was still more so in gaining over Harpagus, the general of the Median army sent against him. Following the example of their commander, the bulk of the troops joined the Elamites, who soon after defeated Astyages and took him prisoner.[1] The humiliated king ere long died, and Cyrus, having put the heir of Media to death, took Amytis, daughter of Astyages, wife of the murdered man,[2] into his harem; thus, virtually, assuming the crown.

Having entered on his career of conquest, the great Elamite carried his arms triumphantly from land to land, till the whole East, as far as the Himalaya, submitted to his rule. Then, having no more worlds to conquer in Further Asia, he turned his face towards its western lands.

The age in which he appeared was a memorable one in history. Among his contemporaries was Amasis, the successful soldier, who, after deposing Pharaoh Hophra,[3] took possession of his throne, and cultivated still closer relations with Greek mercenaries than had cost his predecessor both crown and life. The year B.C. 560 was marked by the accession of Cyrus to his father's throne, that of Pisistratus to supreme power in Athens, and that of Crœsus, son of Gyges, the ally of Pharaoh Hophra, to the throne of Lydia. Twelve years before, Tarquin the Proud had begun his reign at Rome. The West was entering on its great career as that of the East was closing. Hitherto, nations of Semitic blood had been foremost; henceforward, those of the Aryan stock were to take their place. Nor is it without significance that the Persians, who were, here-

[1] Inscription of Nabonidus. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol vii. p. 141.
[2] Thus brothers and sisters married in Elam, as in Persia and Egypt.
[3] See p. 199.

after, destined to close the long era in which the centre of political power had been on the Euphrates, were themselves Aryans, and thus kindred in race with the Greek and the Roman. But they were to hold the sceptre of the world only for a few years, and then yield it for ever to the rising nations of Europe. Ancient history was closing and modern was near its dawn.

Crœsus, the son of Gyges, who had been the ally of the Pharaoh against Babylon, continued his father's war on the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and greatly extended his power. But the fame of his immense wealth was enough, apart from his relations to Egypt, the hereditary enemy of the monarchs of Western Asia, to draw on him the attack of Cyrus, the new conqueror. Advancing from Armenia, the Elamite marched through subdued nations, to Asia Minor, and there Crœsus speedily fell before him. The standard of the conqueror, emblazoned with the figure of a flying eagle—the "ravening bird"[1] of the prophet, was thus supreme from the farthest East to the waters of the Ægean.

Twenty years[2] passed in this vast succession of triumphs, but Babylon still rose above the wide inundation of victory. That it should, was intolerable to a boundless ambition. It, and not Ecbatana, the chief city of Media; or Sardis, the metropolis of Lydia; or Susa, the mountain stronghold of Susiana, was the political capital of Asia. That vast quadrangle of huge walls, with broad walks along their tops, which were surmounted by lofty towers, and guarded below, by a hundred gates of bronze, was a province

[1] Isa. xli. 2; xlvi. 11. Xen., *Cyrop.*, vii. 1.

[2] If Mr. Pinches be correct, the time spent in subduing Media and the other countries was only about twelve years. He thinks the final subjugation of Media was in B.C. 550. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 146.

rather than a metropolis. It enclosed within its bulwarks an aggregate of great cities and far-stretching suburbs, of wide parks, and gardens, and waving fields. The great commercial highways of Asia ran through it, and human industry had turned the desert round it into the most fruitful plain in the world. In its learned institutions was to be found the highest culture of the age; in its



The Great King attended by his Courtiers and Genii.

mansions and palaces, the accumulated wealth of plundered nations, and the refinements of the most consummate luxury. It was, moreover, the religious centre of Western Asia, and the citadel of the great gods, before whom all nations had trembled. While they remained unconquered, they seemed invincible. Subject nations might invoke them to aid revolt from the new Power.

Ambition and interest thus combined to make an assault on the great city of the Euphrates only a question of time. Within twenty years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon, hemmed in on all sides by the conquests of Cyrus, was the only Power that still claimed independence. Its king, Nabonidus, the third in succession from the conqueror of Jerusalem, had long foreseen his danger. It almost seems, indeed, from an inscription of the period, that at first he aided Cyrus against the Medes,[1] but in the last ten years of his reign he appears to have relapsed into careless inactivity, living ignobly in his palace in Tema, not far from Babylon,[2] while his army under Belshazzar, his eldest son, was finding a Capua in the luxurious idleness of Accad, or Northern Babylonia. The seclusion of the king, moreover, excited the discontent of the priests; for the images of the gods Nebo[3] and Bel were absent with him, so that

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. p. 145. [2] Sayce calls it a suburb of Babylon.

[3] In the middle of Babylon rose E-Zida, the temple of Nebo and o. Nana Tasmit, with its holy of holies—"the supreme house of life,"—and its lofty tower, known as "the home of the seven spheres of heaven and earth." According to Nebuchadnezzar, it had been founded, though never finished, by an ancient king, and had lain in ruins till rebuilt by himself. The word Nebo means "the proclaimer," "the prophet," and thus indicates the character of the god to whom it was applied. He was the proclaimer of the mind and wishes of Merodach, whether by speech or writing. We have, indeed, only to glance over his titles to see how thoroughly the conception of the prophet was associated in him, with that of the "writer," for he is not only "the wise," "the intelligent," "the creator of peace," "the author of the oracle," but also "the creator of the written tablet," "the maker of writing," and "the opener and enlarger of the ear." There seems, indeed, to have been a time

they could not be paraded in religious processions, to receive public homage. Neglecting to pay them this honour, Nabonidus contented himself with holding festivals and offering sacrifices for the preservation of the capital.

A contemporary inscription, lately discovered, gives a glimpse of Babylonian history in these years. Haran, it tells us, had been taken and destroyed by the Manda, or "barbarians," of Ecbatana, that is, by the Medes, and its temple of the "Moon" had been destroyed.

"At the beginning of my long reign,"[1] says Nabonidus, "Merodach, the great lord, and Sin, the moon-god, the illuminator of heaven and earth, the strong one of the Universe, revealed to me a dream. Merodach spoke to me thus, 'O Nabonidus, king of Babylon, go up with the horse of thy chariot; make bricks for the Temple of Rejoicing, and let the seat of Sin, the great lord, enter within it.' Reverently I spoke to Merodach, the lord of the gods: 'I will build this house, of which thou hast spoken. The barbarians (the Medes) went about it, and their forces were terrible.' Merodach answered me, 'The barbarians of whom thou hast spoken shall not exist, neither they nor their lands, nor the kings, their allies.' In the third year (B.C. 553), when they (the barbarian Medes) caused Cyrus, the king of Elam, his (Merodach's) young servant, to march amongst his army; they provoked him (Cyrus) to battle; the wide-spread barbarians he overthrew: he captured Astyages, king of the barbarians, and seized his treasures; to his own land he took them."

After this, Nabonidus was able to fulfil the promise he had made. Summoning his vast army, from Gaza on the west, and the Persian Gulf on the south, he began the restoration of the temple at Haran, which had been built three hundred years before by Shalmaneser II., and afterwards repaired by Assur-bani-pal.

when he was something more than the son of Merodach and the patron of the literary class, for at Borsippa he was regarded as the supreme god and the creator of the world. Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*.

[1] B.C. 556.

But the storm of war, which had desolated so many other lands, was now about to sweep over Babylon itself. A cylinder, inscribed by order of Cyrus, and discovered by Mr. Rassam, enables us to trace the progress of the catastrophe.

"In the ninth year of Nabonidus (B.C. 547)," it tells us,[1] "Cyrus, king of Persia, in the month Nisan (April), collected his soldiers and crossed the Tigris below Arbela, and the following month marched against the land of Its king took his silver and himself, and made his own children mount (the funeral pyre), and then both king and children were burnt in the midst of it."

Nabonidus, unmoved by the fate of this neighbouring land, still lived as secluded and inactive as ever. The year B.C. 545 was spent, like others, at Tema; Belshazzar, the heir apparent, being quartered with the army in Accad. "Until Nisan (our April) the king did not go to Babylon, neither did Nebo nor Bel. But they kept the festival (of these gods), and presented peace offerings in the temples of Saggil and Zida, for the preservation of Babylon and Borsippa." Meanwhile danger was closing round the empire, for, "on the 21st Sivan (our June) the soldiers (of Elam) invaded Accad."

But six years were to pass before the final crisis. Cyrus had been unable to defeat the Babylonian army in Accad, and it barred the way to the great city. He, therefore, either betook himself to intrigue with the people on the "lower sea," or Persian Gulf, and probably with the Jews in Babylonia, or invaded the lower provinces and subdued them. At last, in B.C. 539, these districts rose against

[1] Here Cyrus calls himself king of Persia. Professor Sayce is, therefore, wrong in saying that he is called so in Ezra only, "because the Persian empire was not founded by Darius till the time of the compiler of that book."

Nabonidus, who now trembled for his safety, and no longer absented himself from Babylon. Bel was brought out, after his long rest, and famous local gods, from far and near, were conveyed to the capital, that all, united, might be induced, by special public honours, to save the imperilled State. In the words of the inscription, "the gods of Marad—Zamama and the gods of Kis—Beltis and the gods of Kharsak-Kalama, the gods of Accad, above and below the sky, were brought to Babylon, but the gods of Borsippa, Cullah and Sippara were not brought." All, however, was useless, and Cyrus marched steadily towards the doomed city. His troops approached at the same time from both north and south, but as they advanced, the cause of Nabonidus was lost by the revolt of Accad. As a result of this, the city of Sippara (Sepharvaim) was taken "on the 14th of Tammuz" (July) without fighting, the king, who had been in it, fleeing to Babylon. But there also, the cylinder tells us, no resistance worth the name was offered, Gobryas, governor of Kurdistan (Gutium), the general of Cyrus, entering the city without a blow, two days after the fall of Sippara. Nabonidus, himself, who had apparently fled, was taken soon after and put into fetters at Babylon. A few bolder spirits kept the gates of one of the temples closed till the end of the month; but they had no weapons, and at last surrendered without fighting.

The public entry of Cyrus into Babylon took place on the 3d of Marchesvan (October), immense crowds filling the roads and streets as he advanced. True to his policy of moderation, he forthwith granted an amnesty, and proclaimed peace to both the city and province. Gobryas, the commander-in-chief of the army, was rewarded by being

made governor-in-chief of the city, and the people in the provinces were propitiated by the restoration to their local shrines of the images brought by Nabonidus to the capital —a measure which was not completed till the month of Adar (February). In that month Nabonidus died, and a public mourning for him, till the third of Nisan, was ordered throughout Accad. A grand funeral, arranged by Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, closed the story of the unfortunate monarch, who was buried in the temple of the Sceptre of the World, the priests of the temple performing high obsequies, and all the people smiting their heads in sorrow. To this point the inscription recording these details is legible, but, unfortunately, the remaining text is imperfect, though enough remains intelligible to shew that it recounts the honours paid by Cyrus and his son to the gods of Babylonia, their offering sacrifices to Bel, and their replacing Nebo in his former shrine.

Happily a third inscription—that on the "cylinder of Cyrus"—supplements the narrative thus far recovered. In it Cyrus relates that the gods were angry with Nabonidus for his neglect of their worship.

"The gods dwelling within their shrines left them in anger when Nabonidus brought them to Babylon. Merodach went about to all men, wherever their seats, and the men of Sumir and Accad (Lower and Upper Babylonia), whom he had sworn should attend him (besought him to return). This favour he granted, and came back. All lands, even the whole of them, rejoiced and ate. And he appointed a king to guide aright in the heart what his hand upholds ;[1] Cyrus, king of Elam, he proclaimed by name sovereign; all men everywhere dwell on his name. The men of Kurdistan and all the barbarians (of Ecbatana—the Medes) he made bow down to his feet, the men of the black-headed race (the Accadians), whom he had conquered with his hand, he governed in justice and righteousness. Merodach, the great lord,

[1] Compare Isaiah.

the restorer of his people, beheld with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart. To his city of Babylon he summoned his march, and bade him take the road to Babylon, going at his side like a friend and comrade. The weapons of his vast army, whose numbers, like the waters of a river, could not be known, he marshalled at his side. Without fighting or battle he caused him to enter Babylon. His (Merodach's) city of Babylon feared. In a place difficult of access he gave into his (Cyrus's) hand, Nabonidus, the king, who did not worship him. The men of Babylon, all of them, and the whole of Sumir and Accad, the nobles and priests who had revolted, kissed his (Cyrus's) feet; they rejoiced in his rule; their faces shone. The god who raises the dead to life, who helps all men in trouble and prayer, has, in goodness, drawn nigh to him (Cyrus), and has made his name strong. I am Cyrus, the king of legions, the great king, the powerful king, the king of Babylon, the king of Sumir and Accad, the king of the four zones, the son of Cambyses the great king, the king of Elam; the great-grandson of Teispes, the great king, the king of Elam; of the ancient seed-royal, whose rule has been beloved by Bel and Nebo, whose sovereignty they cherished, according to the goodness of their hearts. At that time I entered Babylon in peace, I enlarged the seat of my dominion with joy and gladness in the palace of the kings. Merodach, the great lord, (cheered) the heart of his servant, whom the sons of Babylon (obeyed, each) year and day. . . . My vast armies he marshalled peacefully in the midst of Babylon; throughout Sumir and Accad no one reviled me. The temples of Babylon and all its fortresses I established in peace. As for the sons of Babylon . . . their ruins I repaired, and I delivered their prisoners. I prepared for the work (of restoring the shrine) of Merodach, the great lord, and he graciously drew nigh unto me, Cyrus the king, his worshipper, and to Cambyses my son, the offspring of my heart, and to all my army, and in peace we duly restored its front (that of the shrine) in glory.

"All the kings who dwell in the high places of all regions, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, who dwell in (the high places) of the kings of Phœnicia and Sutar, all of them brought their rich tribute and kissed my feet in the midst of Babylon. From (the city of) . . . to the gates of Assur and Istar, . . . Accad, Marad, Zamban, Me-Turnat, and Duran, as far as the borders of Kurdistan; the gods whose seats were in the fortresses upon the Tigris, I restored to their seats, and I built for them shrines that would last long. All these peoples I assembled and I restored their lands. And the gods of Sumir and Accad,

whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of gods (Merodach) had brought to Babylon, I settled in peace in their sanctuaries, by command of Merodach, the great lord. In the goodness of their hearts may all the gods whom I have brought back to their strong places intercede before Bel and Nebo, that they may grant me length of days; may they bless my schemes with success, and may they say to Merodach, my lord, that Cyrus the king, thy worshipper, and Cambyses his son, (deserve his favour)."

From this and the other priceless records of these remote times, already quoted, it is evident that Nabonidus had drawn his ruin on himself, by removing the images of local gods from their ancient sanctuaries, to exalt the glory of the capital, by making it seem as if all other deities were inferior to Merodach, and had been put round him as his subordinates. This, the priests represented as having roused the indignation of "the lord of the gods," thus honoured, and as having led him to reject the king, as Jehovah had rejected Saul, and seek another ruler, after his own heart, as in the parallel case in Israel. This chosen one, it was affirmed, had been found in Cyrus, king of Elam, who as the favourite of Merodach, had been commanded by him to march on Babylon, the god himself undertaking to march at his side, as his friend and comrade. The scribes of Babylonia, in fact, saw in Cyrus, who was "righteous in hand and heart," the instrument of their god, as the prophets of Judah had seen in Nebuchadnezzar the instrument of Jehovah. An annalistic tablet, moreover, drawn up shortly after the conquest of Babylon, hints that the Elamite prince had been secretly aided by a party of malcontents in Chaldæa itself. It is, at all events, significant, that on the defeat of Nabonidus, the entire population submitted, and the capital, with its almost impregnable fortifications, threw open its gates. The anger of the

gods was, in fact, only a pious formula of the priests, to secure for themselves, without compromising their order, a foremost share in the results of the discontent of the people, which insured the success of Cyrus. Nabonidus did not belong to the royal house of Nebuchadnezzar, but had raised himself to the throne by a revolution. That he should have removed the images of the local gods, however, to Babylon made his fall inevitable, for it was a sign that the different cities of Babylonia were, henceforth, to be altogether eclipsed, in religious as well as political importance, by the capital. It roused the passions of all classes alike : the local priesthoods seeing the ruin of their shrines, which were their maintenance ; the local traders, the loss of their varied profits brought by the temples, and the general population the affront to the traditions and self-love of the districts with which they were identified. Most of the cities thus dishonoured, moreover, were as old as Babylon, or older, and so, also, were their gods, for, though the title of "Bel" or "Lord" had come to be applied to Merodach specially, there was a more ancient "Bel-Belitanas," "the elder Bel," whose worship had spread from the city of Nipur, and who formed one of the supreme triad of Babylonian gods. The policy of Nabonidus, therefore, in seeking to make Merodach absolute lord of a crowd of captive deities, shocked the prejudices of the whole population outside Babylon, and prepared them to see in Cyrus, the restorer of the gods to their old homes, the pious adherent to the ancient faith of the land, and the real favourite of Merodach, himself. Such is the light thrown on the fall of Babylon, by contemporary inscriptions.[1] The narrative

[1] *Journal of R. Asiatic Soc.*, vol. xii. pp. 80, ff. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vii. pp. 139–176. Sayce, *Fresh Light*, pp. 170-174.

of Herodotus, which, if it be actually historical, is thus proved[1] to refer to the capture of the city in B.C. 518, a generation later, by Darius Hystaspis, informs us that Cyrus, hopeless of taking the city by a regular siege, lowered the waters of the Euphrates, which flowed through Babylon, by digging canals, and thus diverting them from their ordinary bed, so that his forces were able to enter freely; the Babylonians, in their panic, having forgotten to close the inner gates which might have saved them.

The brief statement of the Book of Daniel[2] helps us to fill up the picture of the eventful night in which the mistress of the world was thus surprised and taken. Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, associated with him on the throne, and commander-in-chief of the army, had retreated to Babylon after his defeat in Accad, and fancied himself safe within its walls, notwithstanding the recent disasters. Any lingering fear sought to drown itself in the wild revelry of a sacrificial feast to the gods. A thousand nobles sat down to the banquet; the king himself, with a dazzling array of princes and princesses, and the beauties of the harem, attending in high state. High-born ladies were wont to be present at such orgies in Babylon, and rivalled the coarser sex in their shamelessness and excess.[3] The feast, as described in Daniel, brings before us a scene of luxury and splendour only to be found in the greatest of Oriental courts; the magnificent hall, with its sculptured and painted walls and its costly ceiling, the strains of sweet music from antechambers, the air rich with costly perfumes, the tables laden with gold and silver vessels of every size and shape, plundered from half a world; the

[1] Herod., i. 191. [2] Dan. v.

[3] Curtius, v. 1, says, that at feasts, the ladies—"matrons and virgins"—became dead to shame as the revelry advanced.

gorgeous uniforms and robes of the guests, and the blaze of jewels, made up a display such as could only be witnessed in the foremost city of the earth. As if to deride the hopes of the Jews in their approaching deliverance, the rich vessels of gold and silver carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, two generations before, from the Temple at Jerusalem, and since then stored in the treasury of the temple of Bel, were brought out, as part of the boundless wealth of the Great King. Amidst the wilderness of splendour stood great golden vases filled with the richest wines of Helbon and Lebanon, and from these, as if in defiance of Jehovah, the sacred vessels of the Temple were filled, that the guests might drink to the health of the gods which Babylon worshipped.[1]

But the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was at hand, to avenge Himself for the insult. In the same hour, over against one of the many-branched lamps which filled the hall with light, came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote on the smooth stucco of the wall. The revelry was hushed at once, and all faces grew pale. The enchanters, magi, and astrologers were summoned in hot haste. A purple robe of honour and the golden collar of "third ruler" of the kingdom, next to Belshazzar himself, the second, were promised as the reward of any one who should interpret the mysterious symbols. But no one could read them. Then the queen mother, perhaps Nitocris, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar,[2] remembering how Daniel, now an old man, had solved the dreams of her father, long years before, hinted that he, perhaps, could read the awful characters. And now, the hoary prophet, emerging for a moment, by com-

[1] Dan. v. 4. Bar. vi. 4.

[2] Herod., i. 185.

mand, from long seclusion, once more vindicates the Eternal, in whose name he speaks. "The words," which were Aramaic, "mean," cries the seer, "'numbering,' 'weighing,' and 'breaking,' and tell, from above, that God has numbered thy kingdom, O king, and finished it; that thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting; and that thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."[1] True to history, the sacred chronicle mentions the Medes first, and next the Persians, not the Elamites—Cyrus himself, as we have seen on his cylinder, having latterly assumed this style, though the Medes, as the older nation, are flattered by having the first place assigned them; Persian authority not being as yet indisputably supreme.

"In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldæans, slain." Chariot and horse and footman had entered the city by the help of traitors within. The hundred two-leaved gates of bronze,[2] the mighty walls, and the glittering legions, on which the Great King so proudly relied, had been useless to stay the invader. In the panic of sudden and awful surprise, the guards fled from the inner gates, leading from the river banks to the city, leaving them open. The predictions of the prophets were literally fulfilled. Babylon had "suddenly fallen." Its mighty men, palsied with fear, made no resistance while the fierce mountaineers of Media and Elam marched through the silent streets. In so vast a place, the conquerors had triumphed at one end before news of the attack reached the other; but running footmen speedily carried the terrible story to the king. All was lost; every way of escape stopped, the great public buildings in flames, and

[1] Dan. v. 26-28. [2] Isa. xlv. 1, 2. Herod., i. 129.

the soldiery too demoralized to fight.[1] The foe, swarming like locusts, knew no pity, but slaughtered the unresisting population like sheep.[2] Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped, unable to protect their votaries.[3] Belshazzar himself perished amidst the flower of his court, perhaps in a vain attempt at resistance. Babylon, the terror of the earth, the oppressor of nations, was humbled at last. The shock of her fall was felt by all lands. The sacking of London by a sudden surprise, and the subversion of the British empire, would be the only parallel event in our own day.

The transition from the Chaldæan dynasty to the rule of the conquerors followed at once, for resistance appears to have ceased after the taking of Babylon. Cyrus was now supreme over all Asia, from India to the Dardanelles; but, though the moving spirit of this vast revolution, the obscurity of his original position as king only of Elam, and his relations to the Medes, and perhaps the Persians, seem to have led him for the time to deny himself the titular sovereignty. A Median prince appears, therefore, to have been put forward by him as the nominal king, though the real power remained in his own hands. Elam and Persia had been hitherto very inferior in power and rank to Media, the haughty clans of which followed him rather as their adopted chief than as their conqueror; and the time was not yet ripe for affronting this proud assumption of independence. Cyrus had gained the leadership by affecting to liberate Media from a tyrannical despot, and the support of the aristocracy and army had been won only by this diplomacy. A Median prince was therefore established for the time as king in Babylon—Darius, the son of Ahasuerus or Cyaxares, a childless and easily-managed man of

[1] Jer. li. 8, 30, 31. [2] Jer. li. 40. [3] Isa. xlvi. 1.

sixty-two. Two years later this phantom king died, and no further opposition to the accession of Cyrus, as an Elamite, being possible, he openly assumed the empire.[1]

The nominal reign of Darius extended from B.C. 538 to B.C. 536, but has left no recorded incident except that of the deliverance of the prophet Daniel from the den of lions. The new empire had been divided into 120 provinces, each under its own governor, with three Sarekin,[2] or presidents, at their head, of whom Daniel was one.[3] That he should have been thus honoured was natural, from his services to the great Nebuchadnezzar, and the impressiveness of his recent appearance at the last feast of Belshazzar. But the elevation of a Jew who slighted the local gods, roused the jealousy of the native aristocracy, and led to a

[1] The identification of Darius mentioned in Dan. v. 31, etc., has given rise to much controversy. That there should be difficulty about a merely titular king, when Cyrus was the actual ruler, is natural. Various explanations have been given, but the one in the text seems the most satisfactory. For a full discussion of the subject, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. vi. pp. 1-133. *Speaker's Com.*, "Daniel," pp. 305-313. Boscawen thinks Darius is only a title—the king. So does Ernest Bunsen. Vigouroux adds the idea that "Ugbaru," who is named in an inscription by Cyrus, is the same as Darius (vol. iv. p. 483). Lenormant advances, in connection with the appointment of this personage, a proof that Cyrus had not royal power at once, in the fact that in the first and second years he is only called "king of nations," and not till the third year "king of Babylon." *La Divination*, pp. 181-2. "Babylon," in *Annales de Philos. Chrêtienne*, 1881, p. 680. The explanation of Josephus, which has been the one most in favour, is, that the king intended was the son of Astyages, known as Cyaxares II., uncle of Cyrus, as Xenophon tells us (*Cyrop.*, I. v. 2). Under him Cyrus fought the Lydians, and for him he took Babylon, receiving as his reward the daughter of Cyaxares, as wife, and the heirship to the throne of the Medes. But, whatever the solution, it seems unphilosophical to decide dogmatically against the correctness of the Scripture statement, where so little is actually known, and it is inconceivable that one so intimately acquainted with Babylonian life as the author of the Book of Daniel, could have given a wrong name, or committed a historical mistake, in a matter that must have been so well known at the time. The recovery of ample details respecting Sargon of Assyria, who, though one of the greatest of the rulers of Nineveh, was, till a few years ago, known only by a single mention of his name, in the prophecies of Isaiah, and was, hence, regarded as being only a mistake of the prophet, is enough to make us very diffident respecting Darius the Mede being a mistake for Darius Hystaspis.

[2] Apparently an Assyrian word.

[3] Not "first."

plot for the destruction of the prophet, who was now at least eighty years old ; having been carried to Babylon as a youth in the year B.C. 606.

The story of the den of lions is strictly in keeping with Babylonian usages. Assurbanipal says in his annals, "The rest of the people I threw alive into the midst of the bulls and lions, as Sennacherib my grandfather used to do."[1] Lions abounded round the great city, and the Great King is frequently portrayed in the sculptures as engaged in their pursuit.[2] It is probable, moreover, that numbers of



THE GREAT KING HUNTING THE LION.

captive lions were kept in the preserves attached to the palaces, to be turned out for the chase when the king wished.[3]

His religious fidelity was the only point on which Daniel could be assailed. From the earliest ages the kings of Babylon had claimed to be Divine,[4] and it was therefore easy to procure an order from Darius to require all "peti-

[1] *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. ii. p. 362.
[2] See Hommel's *Zwei Jagdinschriften Assurbanipal's*, p. 2.
[3] Layard, *Nineveh and Babylon*, vol. xxiv. pp. 136, 271, 288.
[4] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 8. Oppert, *Inscriptions*, p. 16.

tions" to be made for thirty days, only to himself. To obey such a decree was impossible to one like the prophet. His conduct when it was signed and thus irreversible, was in keeping with his past character, and has ever since presented an ideal of duty, when a choice is demanded between obedience to God or to man. "He went into his house, and his windows in his chamber (on the roof) being open towards Jerusalem (for prayer), he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." What followed is known to us all. Delivered from the lions, Daniel "prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian," whom he may have been largely instrumental in moving to send back the Hebrews to Palestine.

The seventy years of the Captivity,[1] dating from B.C. 606—the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and many others were carried off to Babylon—to the accession of Cyrus as sole king, in B.C. 536, had now expired, and the sure word of prophecy could not fail. Other influences, besides that of Daniel, tended to its fulfilment. The very fact that the king's name stood written in Jewish predictions[2] as that of the deliverer of the nation, could hardly have failed to impress him. Josephus, indeed, expressly ascribes to this the favourable action taken.[3] But, in addition, the interests of the exiles may have been advanced by Jews in the court service,[4] and by Babylonian proselytes of high standing. Nor were motives of human policy wanting. It would help the empire if a friendly people were established under its protection,

[1] Jer. xxv. 11; xxix. 10. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21.
[2] Isa. xli. 25, ff.; xliv. 28; xlv. 1, ff.
[3] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. i. 1.
[4] Dan. i. 6.

between its territories and Egypt, the hereditary rival for dominion over Western Asia.



DARIUS RECEIVING PRISONERS. Relief of the Mountain Inscription of Behistan.

The decree which fulfilled the announcements of prophecy, is reproduced in the first chapter of Ezra.[1] It not only permits the Jews, in every part of the empire, to "go up to Jerusalem" to rebuild the Temple of Jehovah, but invites help for them, in silver, gold, goods, and beasts. The similarity of its style and language to those of other Persian proclamations is striking. Thus, for example, that of Darius Hystaspis, in the inscription at Elvend, requires only the substitution of Jehovah for Ormuzd, to be almost identical with the words of Cyrus. "The great god Ormuzd," says he, "the greatest of gods, who created the earth and the heavens and men, and gave power to men, and made Darius king."[2] Nearly the same language occurs in the inscription of the same monarch at Persepolis.[3] It was natural, therefore, for Cyrus to introduce the name of a god, as he does in his

[1] Ezra i. 2-4.

[2] Ménant, *Exposé des Eléments de la gram. Assyrienne*, Paris, p. 302. *Records of the Past*, vol. ix. p. 78.

[3] *Records of the Past*, vol. ix. p. 74.

decree, though his mention of Jehovah, as shewn in his own inscriptions already given, was only that of a polytheist, willing to honour the national god of any people, if occasion demanded. Neither he nor Darius Hystaspis, indeed, was ever a monotheist, though both have always been thus regarded. Policy dictated the fullest toleration of all the religions of the empire. "Ormuzd, the god of the Aryans," says Darius, at the close of his life, "was my supporter, *and the other gods*, because I have not been wicked. I have not been a liar nor a criminal, neither I nor my family. I have committed no violence to the just or the good. The man who was loyal to my house I heartily protected; him who sinned, I slew. I never did violence to a brave warrior."[1] Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, moreover, is shewn by the Egyptian monuments, to have continued a tolerant polytheist, like his father, for the inscriptions on the Nile praise him as the friend of the priests of Egypt, the adorer of the gods, and the benefactor of their temples. On the sarcophagus of the sacred bull which died while he was in the Nile valley, there is, further, a sculpture shewing him kneeling before the ox-god, while an inscription records that it was honoured with the usual grand funeral, and that Cambyses took part in the solemnity. In the same spirit, we have seen Cyrus recording that he repaired the shrine of "Merodach, his lord," and restored to their places the gods who dwelt among various peoples enumerated, and that he prays to Merodach, as his worshipper, for himself and his son.[2]

[1] Oppert, *Le peuple et la langue des Mèdes*, p. 151. Yet Darius was severe enough when he chose. He tells us that he cut off the nose and ears of a pretender to the crown, and dug out his eyes; after which he kept him chained in public for all the people to see, and finally crucified him. Oppert, p. 133. Sayce speaks of Darius being a Zoroastrian monotheist (*Fresh Light*, p. 176), but the inscription quoted above, shews this to be an error.

[2] P. 346.

Cyrus was thus precisely the man to shew favour to the servants of Jehovah, the Jewish God, since he made it a point to support all religions in turn, that he might win the loyalty of their respective adherents. While, therefore, he honoured the God of the Hebrews in high-sounding phrases, we cannot claim him as more than a shrewd politician, using language which served a temporary end and might perhaps gain him the help of one god the more. But whatever his secret thoughts, he had fulfilled the decree of Providence, and opened the gates of Babylon to the exiles, that they might return freely to their own land, and restore the long-fallen kingdom of God.

The story of Babylon, after its conquest by Cyrus, is a record of swift decay. He was succeeded by his son Cambyses, who was followed, after the suppression of a pretender—"the false Bardis"—by Darius, the son of Hystaspis, and the real founder of the Persian empire. Twice during his reign he had to recapture the mighty city. Very soon after his accession, it revolted under a leader who claimed to be the great Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabonidus, and was recovered, after a siege of two years, only by stratagem. Six years later it rose again, under an Armenian, who, also, claimed to be Nebuchadnezzar. It was, however, once more besieged and taken; the poor phantom king suffering death by impalement. On this second recovery of the great city, Darius protected himself against further trouble from it, by throwing down its mountain-like walls, and his son, Xerxes, completed its humiliation, by destroying the great temple of Bel, and carrying off the golden statue of the god, and the accumulated wealth of the sacred treasuries. Babylon, however, still remained one of the capitals of the Persian empire

till the rise of the city of Seleucia, in the year B.C. 300, after the death of Alexander the Great, in B.C. 324. From that time, it gradually decayed, till its palaces became mounds of rubbish, in terrible fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, spoken centuries before

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RETURN.

THE glowing words of the prophets respecting Cyrus had kindled a fervent loyalty to him in the breasts of the exiles. He had been proclaimed the "Shepherd" of Jehovah, His "anointed, whom Jehovah had called from the East" to free His chosen people and rebuild His temple. Fortunately, the Phœnicians were also devoted admirers of the great king. They stood between him and Egypt on the north of Palestine; the Jews would do a similar service on the south. Policy dictated special favour under such circumstances. Hence the exiles were not only permitted to take all their private property with them; their brethren and others were encouraged to help them in their great undertaking. The joy at the national deliverance was unbounded. Even the imagery of the prophets seemed inadequate to express it. Men could now, once more, say among the heathen that Jehovah reigned.[1]

When Jehovah led back the captives of Zion—sang one of the poets of the day—

> "We were like them that dream;
> Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
> And our tongue with singing.
> Then was it said among the heathen:
> 'Jehovah has done great things for them.'
> Yes! Jehovah *has* done great things for us,

[1] Ps. xcvi. 10. See also Ps. xcvii., xcix.

And made us glad.
O Jehovah, lead back our captive ones!
Let them roll on the now desolate land
With a flood full as the torrents of the Negeb
In the time of a winter storm." [1]

The prospect before those who returned was for the time sad; for Jerusalem lay in heaps, and must be rebuilt amidst many difficulties. But

"They that sow in tears will reap in joy;
He that goes afield weeping, to scatter his armful of seed,
Will (one day) come from it again bearing His sheaves."

There was both joy and a thoughtful sadness among the exiles. Far and near throughout the empire, heralds proclaimed the good news that made every Jew a free man. Multitudes had been sold as slaves when first brought from Judah; not a few to hard masters. But now they that "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron," found their prison gates thrown open, and their bands broken in sunder.[2] As the news travelled from land to land, the best of the race set their faces, from every region, towards Jerusalem. Not a few, we may believe, found their way to the loved spot, from the West, by sea,[3] making light of any suffering it brought, if only, at last, they stood once more in Zion. The route of many, from the distant East, did not pass near Babylon, and they could only reach Palestine long after the main body of their brethren. A kindlier feeling had latterly been cherished by some of the native population towards the exiles; and now that royalty smiled on them, they were loaded with favour. The richer Jews, con-

[1] **Ps. cxxvi.** This seems the meaning of this figure; see vol. v. p. 353.
[2] Ps. cvii. 10-14. [3] Ps. cvii. 23-30.

tented with their position, preferred, for the most part, to remain in Babylon.[1] But while themselves faint-hearted, they were proud of the braver spirits, who, having little to lose, more readily joined the great movement, and they liberally contributed whatever might be useful on the way or in Palestine. Cyrus, himself, commanded his treasurer, Mithridates, to hand over, from the treasure house of the Temple of Bel, to those about to return, all the sacred vessels of gold and silver carried off by Nebuchadnezzar at the destruction of Jerusalem. No fewer than 5,400 salvers, cups, tankards, spoons, basins, etc., of the precious metals, were thus once more delivered to the priests.[2] Beasts of burden, supplies of food, and all the requirements of the journey and its subsequent object, seem to have been liberally added, with much besides, toward the great object of restoring the worship of the Temple on Mount Zion.

The body of pilgrims, of both sexes, found at last willing to face the perils of the desert, and of their ruined native land, amounted to no more than 42,360, including children above twelve years of age.[3] Besides these, there were 7,337 male and female slaves, 200 of them trained singers and musicians. Of the twenty-four priestly "courses," only four had representatives, although the number of these was over 4,000;[4] nearly a tenth of the whole caravan. The enterprise was especially fitted to attract the sacred orders; but the indifference of twenty of the priestly clans out of twenty-four shews how wide must have been the

[1] An inscription gives a glimpse of ordinary Babylonian life in these times. A lady receives as her dowry 35 mana of silver, and 2 mana of gold, a ring, and two slaves. With these she purchases a corn-field, planted and tilled, and thus has the means of living, permanently secured her. *Bab. and Orient. Record*, ii. 8.

[2] Ezra i. 7; v. 14. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. [3] Jer. xxvii. 16-22; xxviii. 2, 3. Dan. v. 3.

[3] This is stated in 1 Esd. v. 41. [4] Ezra ii. 36-39.

defection of the exiles at large, from the faith of their fathers, or, at least, how faint was their enthusiasm for it. Still, the presence of so many priests as actually set out from Babylon, lent a dignity to the whole body of Pilgrim Fathers whom they accompanied. Honoured for their high descent and venerated office, they formed, moreover, a nucleus round which the religious life of the new colony might gather. But the general indifference or apostasy of their order was insignificant compared with that of the Levites. Formerly much more numerous than the priests, only seventy-four cared to leave Babylon. A defection so striking was destined to have important results. Hitherto humble in their position, the fewness of the Levites in the new community henceforth led to a constant struggle for equality with their more favoured brethren, though they gained it only at the latest period of the nation. Besides the Levites strictly so called, there were, however, some of the two lower grades of the Levitical order; 128 singers of the clan of Asaph, and 139 of the order of Temple police, who guarded the gates and circuit of the sacred building; descendants of the men who, under Jehoiada, had destroyed the heathen tyranny of Athaliah.[1]

Besides these, there was a band of 392 "Nethinim," that is, persons "given" or "devoted," as Temple slaves, under the Levites, and other unfortunates known as the "slaves of Solomon." The Nethinim seem to have been handed over to this humble service as an organized body, by David,[2] and possibly embraced part of the descendants of the Canaanites who were enslaved in the days of Joshua.[3] An examination of the list of Nethinim names, given

[1] See vol. iv. p. 159. [2] Ezra viii. 20. [3] Josh. ix. 21–27.

in Ezra and Nehemiah,[1] shews that these people were mainly the posterity of those who could not trace themselves to any legitimate father—that is, of bastards, or children of fornication. Illegitimates and Nethinim were not allowed to marry Israelites: a prohibition extending to both sexes. Hence they were pariahs, cut off from the nation and utterly despised. Moabites, Ammonites, Egyptians, and Edomites, were prohibited from marrying Israelites only for a certain number of generations, and this did not apply at all to the daughters. The Gibeonites, from whom the Nethinim have often been thought to have descended, were not degraded like this outcast race, for David allowed them to revenge themselves on Saul's children, for injuries done to them by Saul,[2] and they built part of the wall of Jerusalem, after the Return.[3] The name-lists shew that one division of these Temple slaves had charge of the "rings" of the Temple hangings,[4] and another, of the "hooks,"[5] while a third, perhaps, sheared the sheep offered for sacrifice in the Temple. There were writers, moreover, among them, connected with the sacred rolls, and pourers of libations. In these offices other bodies were associated with them—descendants of prisoners of war—the B'nai Me'unim,[6] the B'nai Nephisim, and the B'nai Rezin, probably descendants of prisoners taken in the wars with the Syrian king of that name.[7] A very large number of names shew by their form that they are derived from a feminine original.

The women from whom the Nethinim were mainly descended are supposed, with great probability, to have been the prostitutes attached to the Temple, from the time of

[1] Ezra ii. Neh. vii. [2] 2 Sam. xxii. 9. [3] Neh. iii. 7.
[4] Exod. xxv. 12; xxvi. 24; xxviii. 28. [5] Exod. xxvi. 6; xxxv. 11.
[6] 2 Chron. xxvi. 7. Ezra ii. 50. [7] 2 Kings xv. 37; xvi. 5.

Solomon. The original "slaves of Solomon" were probably women of this class; the foreign gods and goddesses that king introduced bringing them with them. They, undoubtedly, existed in connection with the Temple down to the Exile.[1] The sacred prostitutes are called in the Hebrew Bible, Kèdaishah (female), and Kadaish (an emasculated male). The men were consecrated to the service of Venus or Astarte, and were temple slaves of Astarte or Ashtoreth. They wore a female dress, and wandered, begging for the goddess, from town to town, as I have elsewhere described; the money paid them by women being part of the income of the temple.[2] The women prostitutes, also, gave their hire to the temple to which they were attached.

At a time when religious enthusiasm ran so high, it was natural that great care should be taken in registering the free citizens and priests allowed to take part in the great migration, since the inheritance of property and the legal discharge of the offices of religion depended on family descent. Failure to satisfy the registrars did not indeed prevent the return of any one with his brethren to Palestine, but it withheld some privileges from laymen, and excluded priests from the exercise of their office. Nor were strict precautions uncalled for. At least one body of intending emigrants from an outlying part of Chaldæa—perhaps a remnant of some ancient deportation from Palestine—were not able to "shew their father's house," or give their pedigree,[3] while another, claiming priestly rank, on the ground of descent from Barzillai, the friend of David, failing to

[1] 1 Kings ii. 5; xiv. 24; xv. 12. 2 Kings xxi. 7; xxiii. 7; xxiv. 9, 19. Ezek. xxiii. 36-44.

[2] Gen. xxxviii. 21, 22. Deut. xxiii. 18. Hos. iv. 14, etc. See *Bab. and Oriental Record*, ii. 66-71.

[3] Ezra ii. 59.

prove their Aaronic descent, were pronounced disqualified for sacred duties, till their position could be settled by the high-priestly Urim and Thummim,[1] which, however, as a matter of fact, disappeared with the Captivity. This mysterious ornament may have been overlooked in the restoration of sacred objects by Cyrus, but more probably it had been lost at the destruction of the Temple. Whatever its fate, it was never seen after the Return.

At the head of the migration were two men, specially fitted for their position. Foremost stood Zerubbabel, "the Prince of Judah," a grandson of the popular king, Jehoiachin, and thus a descendant of the great national hero, David—the only person of royal blood who returned at this time, though others followed at a later period.[2] His name seems to indicate that he was born in Babylonia,[3] presumably in the earlier years of the Captivity, though, like Daniel, he had also a Chaldæan name, Sheshbazzar.[4] Alive twenty years later, he could not, however, at this time have been very old. Next him stood Joshua, the high priest, grandson of the high priest Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death at Riblah, after the fall of the Holy City.[5] In these two the multitude had leaders whose personal claims were strengthened by hereditary rank. Nor were those who followed them unworthy of such chiefs; for, apart from the body of priests, even the rank and file were descended from the flower of the nation, carried off with King Jehoiachin, from Judah and Benjamin. Ten leaders, under Zerubbabel and Joshua, making twelve in

[1] Ezra ii. 63. 1 Esd. v. 36–40.

[2] Ezra i. 8; v. 14.

[3] "Zerua Babel" = begotten in Babylon.

[4] Gesenius and Dietrich think this name Persian, meaning "Fire-worshipper.' Fürst suggests the Sanscrit word for "illustrious."

[5] 1 Chron. vi. 14. 2 Kings xxv. 18.

all, perhaps in touching allusion to the original number of the Tribes, marshalled the host in as many divisions.

If we may trust later traditions, the setting out of the "Captivity" for Palestine was joyous in the extreme. An escort of one thousand cavalry accompanied them, for protection against the desert Arabs, then, as now, given to plunder, and they started to the music of tabrets and flutes.[1] The few rich among them indulged in the luxury of horses, of which there were 736, or of mules, of which there were 245. The aged, the children, and the delicate women rode on camels, which stalked along, 420 in number, while 6,270 asses were partly used for riding, but mainly carried baggage. But that there should have been only 7,671 beasts of carriage for 50,000 people, shews that all but a few marched on foot, and that there was little to carry, unless some details have been left unrecorded. The enterprise thus undertaken, though it must have seemed the merest trifle to the general population of Babylonia, was an event of supreme importance in the religious history of the world. It was, indeed, a wholly insignificant matter that, from all the Mesopotamian provinces, thin, unnoticeable threads of emigration should have trickled towards the capital, for the whole body that ultimately set out for Palestine, including men, women, and children, was only about half as many as are added to the population of London every year. But, if this movement had not been carried out, Judaism, we may fairly suppose, would have been lost, by the fusion of the Hebrews with their kindred race on the Euphrates, as had happened, in great measure, with the Ten Tribes. The sacred books would, in this case, have been lost to us, and Christianity

[1] 1 Esd. v. 2.

would never have existed. The Pilgrim Caravan, so weak and insignificant, bore with it the religious future of the world.

The dreary journey across the desert takes over four months, at the rate of such caravans.[1] From the Euphrates to the north of Syria the route lay over a hard gravel plain, with no mountains, or clumps of palms, or bubbling springs, to break the wearying monotony, for the grand pictures of smooth, made roads, and pools of water, and shadowing trees on their route, as sung by the great poet of the Return, were, after all, only the beautiful dreams of an enthusiastic, divinely-illumined patriot. The track ran at first on the west side of the Euphrates, northward from Babylon; then struck across the desert towards Lebanon, which may have been skirted on the south-east, if they made for Damascus, or approached from the north, by Hamath and Riblah, which was apparently the usual road in those days. By a singular coincidence, the new Exodus took place in the same month as that in which Israel had fled from Egypt, 800 or 900 years before.[2]

The state of Palestine when the exiles at last reached it, after their painful journey, was far from inspiriting. On the south, the Edomites had seized Hebron and all Judah, down to the Philistine Plain, while on the north-east of Jerusalem, between Jericho and the former territory of the northern kingdom, they had appropriated a large tract and built a town, fitly called Akrabbim—"the scorpions," or "scourges." That the hereditary enemy of Jerusalem, who had laughed at its downfall, and

[1] That the news of the fall of Jerusalem took five months to reach Ezekiel, shews that the person who brought it had stayed by the way, at some point—perhaps Damascus.

[2] 1 Esd. v. 6. Exod. xii. 18.

hounded on the Chaldæans against its population, should hold great part of the country, was almost intolerable to the new comers.[1] A long and embittered strife to regain the territory thus seized, marked the next four hundred years. The Edomites, driven out of their own country by the Nabatheans, clung eagerly to their new acquisitions in Palestine, which may have been given them by Nebuchadnezzar, in return for their services against the Jews, that they might keep in check the Hebrews still in the land. A few towns and a small territory had to be resigned to the returned exiles, by command of Cyrus; but with this exception, the Edomites held their ground, with little loss, till subdued by John Hyrcanus about 130 years before Christ, when they were forced to submit to circumcision, and had Jewish prefects set over them.

The centre of the land was partly in the hands of the descendants of the mixed races settled in it by the Assyrian kings, after the destruction of Samaria.[2] In spite, however, of the large deportations from the Northern Kingdom to the East, great numbers of Israelites had escaped captivity, and having intermarried with the new foreign population, infused so strong a Jewish feeling into their children, as to lead them in the end to claim that they, as well as the people of Judah, were Hebrews, for mixed marriages had always been common in all the tribes alike, and thus there were, in reality, very few pure Jews. The desire to unite with the southern clan was, indeed, of old date; for the later kings of Judah had won back many of the survivors of the Northern Kingdom to loyalty to Jerusalem. The bands who were present from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun, at the Passover of Hezekiah;[3] the con-

[1] 1 Macc. iv. 29; v. 3. [2] See vol. iv. p. 290. [3] 2 Chron. xxx. 11.

tributions towards the repairs of the Temple, collected, under Josiah, from "Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel;"[1] and the company of pilgrims slain by Ishmael on their way from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, to the ruins of the Holy City,[2] had strikingly shewn the depth of this sentiment. But the exclusive narrowness of the new founders of Jerusalem was destined soon to turn a feeling thus friendly into the fiercest hatred.

The stronghold of Bethshean—afterwards known as Scythopolis—was then held by the descendants of the Scythians, who had remained there after the terrible invasion in the reign of Josiah, and thus formed, as it were, the outpost of the heathen races, who, in the main, peopled Galilee—"the heathen-district."[3]

Galilee, however, we all know, was recognized in the days of Christ as largely Jewish, the jealousy of the South never proposing to exclude its Hebrew population from national privileges, though so relentless in the case of the Samaritans. It had, in fact, been largely resettled by exiles returned from the captivity of the Ten Tribes—a "remnant" still faithful to Jehovah, though the mass of their brethren had merged themselves in the heathenism of the East, or preferred to remain beyond the Euphrates. When the Second Book of Esdras was written, it had come to be believed that the great body of the northern Jews had left Assyria long before, for "a further country where never mankind dwelt,"[4] but would be brought back in the days of the Messiah. Josephus fancied the Ten Tribes

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9. [2] Jer. xli. 5-8.

[3] Ewald, vol. v. p. 98.

[4] 2 Esd. xiii. 41. The date of this book is assigned by Hilgenfeld to B.C. 28-25. Gfrörer and others, however, think it belongs to the age of Domitian, A.D. 81-96, while Lücke, originally at least, fancied it written under Trajan, A.D. 98-117

were still beyond the Euphrates,[1] and since then, age after age has seen fresh speculations respecting them. Afghanistan, China, Nestoria, the wilds of Western America, and even the supposed Polhynia[2] round the North Pole, have been regarded as the place of their sojourn. But if only a "remnant" of Judah could be induced to return after a comparatively brief exile, how much less could any return of the whole Ten Tribes be expected, after a residence in the East of more than a century longer?

The language of the prophets is constantly quoted in support of the fancy, so popular in our day, that the Ten Tribes are yet to return from some unknown land, and inhabit Palestine. When it is remembered, however, that similar language, employed of the exiles of Judah in Babylon, was fulfilled by the return of a very small proportion of their whole number, it will be seen that the return of the Ten Tribes which has already taken place, is a corresponding fulfilment of what had been predicted respecting the sons of the Northern Kingdom. But though the Jewish population of Galilee was a vindication of prophecy, the relations of the northern tribes to the southern were henceforth to be changed. The very name of Israel was to be relinquished. That of Judah was alone to remain. In earlier days, "Israel" had superseded the national name of Hebrew; but from the period of the Return, that of "Jew" or "Judæan" took the place of both.

The new colony was thus hemmed in on all sides by other races. It held only Jerusalem and a small district round it, and even for this it had to thank the favour of Cyrus.

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. v. 2

[2] A gentleman gravely maintained this opinion to me when Captain Nares' expedition to the North was being sent out, and I have seen it advanced in print since then

The list of towns named by Ezra and Nehemiah as the first homes of their brethren, includes only Bethlehem on the south, while on the north their territory did not extend beyond the narrow limits of Benjamin.[1] Even a generation afterwards, Southern Judah had not been won by the Hebrews.[2] In the time of Nehemiah, however, nearly a hundred years later, they at last got a footing in Hebron, to which its Canaanite population had once more given the old name of Kirjath-Arba,[3] and they had pushed their boundaries some distance into the Negeb.[4] Beersheba, indeed, on the edge of the southern desert, then had, again, a village round its wells, and the clan of Temple-singers ultimately established themselves in the Jordan valley, having forced the Edomites to give them lands in that district.[5] On the west, however, the Philistines eagerly reasserted their independence; speaking their own language and worshipping Dagon, as of old, in their capital, Ashdod.[6]

The Jewish community, under Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, its civil and religious heads, with the ten inferior leaders appointed in Babylon, was organized more fully very soon after the Return. A body of superior magistrates, known as "Sarim" or "Horim," was appointed, and the ancient order of elders once more installed, as heads of limited districts and of the smaller towns.[7] Over the whole stood the local Persian governor, whose headquarters were, perhaps, at Samaria, Zerubbabel being responsible to him, and under his authority in matters of importance.[8] The houses of the foreign population, removed to make

[1] Neh. vii. 26–36. Ezra ii. 21, 28. 34.
[2] Zech. vii. 7.
[3] Art. on Kirjath-Arba, in *Dict. of Bible.*
[4] Neh. xi. 25–35.
[5] See lists in Ezra and Nehemiah.
[6] Neh. iv. 7; xiii. 24. 1 Macc. x. 84.
[7] Ezra ix. 2; x. 8, 14. Neh. iii. 9, 12, 14, 15; iv. 16.
[8] Neh. ii. 7–9. There were at least two Persian governors of the lands west of the Euphrates—Syria in the widest sense.

room for the new colony, may have sheltered a portion of the emigrants, but Jerusalem itself lay in ruins, and the exiles must for a time have lived mostly in tents.[1] How many Jews were already in Judah when their brethren from the Euphrates arrived, cannot be known; but they were probably numerous, since the bulk of the peasantry seems to have been left in the country by Nebuchadnezzar. Besides these, fresh bands from every part of the world constantly arrived and strengthened the national movement. But, henceforth, Israel was to be only a vassal of the heathen. Its independence was gone for ever, except during the brief interval of the Maccabean revolt. Persians, Greeks, Syrians, and Romans, were to rule, the Jewish people preserving an existence only under the shadow of their power.

The Return had been pre-eminently a religious impulse. Weaned for ever from idolatry, profoundly penitent for the former backslidings of their nation in this respect, and kindled into enthusiasm for Jehovah by the glowing words of the prophets, the colonists indulged in dreams of a splendid national and religious future. The central wonder of the State was to be the new Temple on Mount Zion, which, with Jerusalem, Ezekiel had painted as covering a great part of Palestine. Its material magnificence, moreover, and that of the capital, were to be in keeping with this transcendent ideal. Hence, the first thought of the exiles on reaching their fatherland, was to restore the

[1] Quotations of Psalms were very commonly put on the walls, and over the doors of houses, in Palestine, in the fifth and sixth centuries before Christ, as texts from the Koran still are on Mohammedan houses everywhere. Many such sacred inscriptions of the ancient Hebrews are to be seen, even in our own day, in the Hauran and Northern Syria, and one has been discovered in Southern Palestine. They are many centuries older than the oldest known manuscript of the Septuagint. *Pal. Explor. Fund Reports*, Jan. 1891, p. 71.

ancient faith. As a step towards this, contributions were invited to begin the rebuilding of the Temple on its former site, and the response was munificent. The rich heads of clans, or "fathers' houses," gave the great sum of 20,000 darics, or about £12,000, in gold, and 2,000 minæ of silver, or about £22,000;[1] while the common people gave as much in gold, and about £20,000 in silver, besides sixty-seven robes for priests. In addition to this, Zerubbabel, apparently the richest of the exiles, added the splendid gift of 10,000 golden darics, about £6,000, 50 basons, and 530 robes for the priests, most of whom appear to have been very poor.

Six months had elapsed between the setting out from Babylon and the distribution of the new community in their future localities in Judah.[2] No sooner was this effected, however, than a general gathering of the people was called at Jerusalem, to raise anew the long-destroyed altar of Jehovah on the exact spot where it had formerly stood. The first wave of enthusiasm was still at its height, and could not content itself with even the huge dimensions of the altar of Solomon. The golden future of the race, and the world-wide triumph of its faith, demanded an altar twice the size.[3] This built, its inauguration followed on the first day of the seventh month, with the utmost splendour possible under the circumstances. Numbers from the various races and districts of the whole land were desirous to make Jerusalem their religious centre, and for the time

[1] Taking the mina as = 100 shekels. Gesenius. The word translated "pound" is "mina" (Neh. vii. 70–72). The amounts in Nehemiah are more detailed than in Ezra, but the aggregate is smaller. Ezra makes the whole contributions 61,000 golden darics = £36,600, besides 5,000 minæ = £50,000. The priests' dresses, however, are given as only 100. Perhaps the two statements refer to distinct contributions at different times. Ezra ii. 69.

[2] Ezra iii. 1.

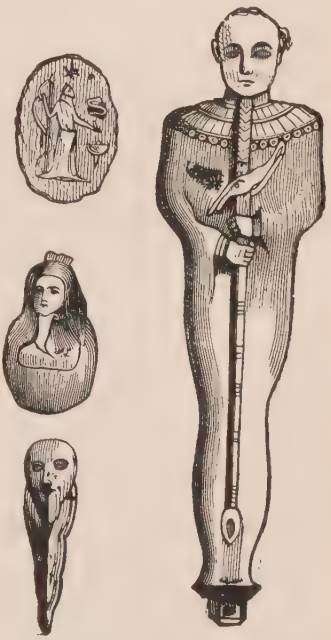
[3] Graetz, ii. 2, 83.

befriended the colony,[1] perhaps helping it by contributions. Their presence added to the glory of the day. Once more the smoke of the morning and evening sacrifice arose, and henceforth each week-day and Sabbath, with the new moons and other festivals, saw their appropriate offerings and sacrifices duly presented or consumed. The day chosen for the inaugural ceremony was also that of the great autumnal Feast of Tabernacles, the harvest home of the land; a day famous as that on which Solomon had dedicated his Temple, though it was marked, also, as the same on which Jeroboam consecrated the rival sanctuary of Bethel. The joyous feast was now kept with glad hearts and high hopes. Loud "Amens" from the people answered the chants and jubilant noise of the Levites. It was the birthday of the restored nation. Then first, if modern criticism be correct, rose the strains of the 115th Psalm,[2] with its lofty protest against idolatry, and its proud trust in Jehovah alone as the God of Israel.

But the foundation of the Temple was not yet laid.[3] Money, however, was in the treasury, and the produce of the land furnished materials for barter.[4] Masons and carpenters were hired at Jerusalem, and Phœnician sailors were engaged to bring down in rafts, by sea, to Joppa, the cedars granted by Cyrus for the future sanctuary. Great efforts were also made by Zerubbabel and the high priests, zealously aided by priest, Levite, and citizen, to clear the site of the old Temple, and prepare for laying the foundation of another. Yet it was not till the second month of the second year, B.C. 535, that this imposing ceremony could take place. By that time the new stones were

[1] 1 Esd. v. 50, amended by Gesenius.
[2] Ewald. Others think it of a different period.
[3] Ezra iii. 6. [4] Ezra iii. 7.

squared and ready; the ruins sufficiently out of the way. On the appointed day the priests stood in order, in their new vestments, and the first stone of the second Temple was laid, amidst the blasts of silver trumpets, the clash of cymbals, the music of varied instruments,[1] and the triumphant notes of Psalms specially composed for the occasion.[2] But sadness as well as joy marked the day. There were aged men in the crowd who could compare the past with the present. In their boyhood they had seen the former Temple, before its destruction, and the recollection overcame them. Loud weeping and sorrowful cries mingled with the sounds of rejoicing; but the bad omen was drowned in still louder shouts of gladness from the multitude.



Teraphim, or Household Gods.

Meanwhile, a wide and sincere interest was felt in the rise of Jerusalem from its ashes. The mingled race of the Samaritan territory, proud of its partly Jewish blood, retained the worship of Jehovah as taught by the priests sent from Assyria to its forefathers, a hundred and fifty years before. But many heathen customs tainted

[1] 1 Esd. v. 59.

[2] lxxxvii., cvi., cvii., cxviii., cxxxvi. The Pilgrim Psalms, cxx.–cxxxiv., seem also to date from this time.

their practice, and they even worshipped idols, especially household gods.[1] Their priests, who were, doubtless, members of some of the Ten Tribes, had been accustomed in the East to see winged bulls at the entrances of palaces and great mansions, and these had been known as "spirits," and "guardians of the royal footsteps," and "averters of evil." Winged lions, the emblems of Nergal, the god of war and of death, had also been familiar to them in similar positions, being supposed to protect the house at whose doors they were placed. An ancient fragment of an inscription reads: "Place the image of the heroic warrior who cuts in pieces, inside the door. Place the heroic warrior who cuts in pieces, who overpowers the hand of rebels, on the thresholds of the doors, right and left." The statue of Merodach, "the protector of the host of men," and of his all-wise father, Hea, were to be placed inside the doorway. Images of "the divine protectors" were also put beneath the threshold, in a specially prepared receptacle, and such images have actually been found in this position in the palace of Sargon. They were to protect the royal footsteps, in going out or entering, and to turn away all evil from him.

Besides the images of Nergal and Merodach, however, there were also images of the special guardian gods and goddesses of the person using them—his household gods; the teraphim of the Jews, which have their counterparts in the Zendavesta, and are still in use among the Arab tribes. These teraphim, as found in Assyria, included small figures of Nergal, Merodach, and the Fire-god, who, like the others, was a "dispeller of evil," and is represented with flowing locks and beard, symbolical of flames, and holding in his

[1] Ezra iv. 2.

hands the sacred cone, the emblem of the fire-stick with which fire was then kindled. There were also figures of Bel, with the horned cap, "the crown of dignity," and of the jackal-headed god of death, and of Hea, the Fish-god. These were hidden, as teraphim, in the cavity under the door, or set up in the house. Superstitious usages, more or less copied from these Mesopotamian customs, had been introduced into the district formerly held by the Ten Tribes, though, indeed, reverence for teraphim had characterized the Hebrews, as a whole, from the earliest times till the Captivity, after which they are not mentioned.[1] The more thoughtful class of Samaritans, however, wearied of so rude and hybrid a creed, longed to join the returned exiles and make Jerusalem their religious centre, feeling that Judah alone had preserved the ancient faith in its purity.

A mission was therefore sent from the North, to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the elders, to make overtures for co-operation in rebuilding the Temple. The proposal might well have been accepted under judicious conditions, and a disastrous quarrel averted; but hatred of idolatry was now too strong in the new community, to tolerate any alliance with a people in any measure defiled by heathenism. Friendly relations would lead to intermarriage and familiarity with impure worship, and the tendency is always greater to sink than to rise. The Mosaic law, moreover, was held with a superstitious veneration, which overlooked the spirit in homage to the letter. The proposal, made

[1] Teraphim are mentioned in Gen. xxxiv. 19, 34, 35. Judg. xvii. 5; xviii. 14, 17, 18, 20. 1 Sam. xv. 23; xix. 13, 16. 2 Kings xxiii. 24. Ezek. xxi. 21 (26). Hos. iii. 4. Zech x. 2. That teraphim ("idols") are mentioned in this passage by Zechariah, with "diviners" and the like, seems a strong ground for thinking this portion of the prophecy older than the Exile.

apparently in good faith, was therefore declined. Judah would itself build the Temple, as Cyrus had permitted, without help.

The results of this exclusiveness were momentous. Two parties rose among the Jews themselves: Puritans and Broad Churchmen. Old jealousies and hatreds were rekindled. Samaria had been despised, before the Exile, as a heathen community; it began to be so again. But it had a dangerous weapon of attack in its turn. The presence of a descendant of David at the head of Judah, gave a specious colour to pretexts of possible political complications in the future. The Persian officials in Samaria lent themselves only too readily to these suspicions. Hired counsellors were sent to Ecbatana and Susa, to spread them at court, and they succeeded in stopping the Temple works till the death of Cyrus, in a distant war in Upper Asia, seven years later.[1] Nor were they even then allowed to recommence. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, was too much engaged in his campaigns to trouble himself about the small colony at Jerusalem, and, thus, through his reign also, no progress was made.[2] Then followed the reign of an impostor—the false Smerdis or Bardes,[3] who claimed to be the murdered brother of Cambyses, but was detected and put to death after a reign of between seven and eight months. It was only in the second year of the next king, Darius Hystaspis, that the sound of work was again heard on Mount Moriah.

In these weary years, criminations and recriminations at Jerusalem lowered the moral tone and cooled the zeal of

[1] Ezra iv. 24.

[2] B.C. 529-522.

[3] Cambyses had secretly murdered his brother Bardes, and an impostor, Gaumata the Magian, had seized the throne in the name of the dead prince. See Ebers' *Egyptian Princess*, where the story of Bardes is charmingly told, from Herodotus.

the Jewish colony.[1] But better days returned with the accession of Darius in the year B.C. 522, fourteen years after the Return. Just and honourable, he became another Cyrus to them, and the second founder of the new State.

[1] Ewald thinks the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes in Ezra iv. 6, 7, are Cambyses and the false Smerdis respectively. But Schrader and Keil suppose that verses 6 to 24 are in their wrong place, by the error of some scribe, and refer them to the reign of Xerxes, B.C. 486–465, and Artaxerxes of the Long Hand, B.C. 465–425. The names as given in Ezra seem to support this. It is now the generally accepted opinion. See Riehm and the *Calwer Handwörterbuch*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.

The reign of Darius was marked by the appearance of two prophets—Haggai and Zechariah—who, wearied by the apathy of their brethren, took advantage of the accession of a prince so friendly to the nation, to stimulate them to a resumption of the long-delayed work of rebuilding the Temple. Of these two, Haggai was much the older; for he was either one of the captives led from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and thus had seen the old Temple in its glory, or, at latest, had been born in Babylon at the beginning of the Exile.[1] During the Captivity he had, no doubt, helped forward the great religious revival to which the Return was due, though no record of his preaching in those dark years remains. The second, Zechariah, a much younger man,[2] was the son or grandson of Iddo,[3] the head of one of the priestly houses represented in the Jerusalem colony. Like Ezekiel, he was of priestly extraction; but he belonged, besides, to a family of prophets, for he inherited his dignity, as one of the order, from his father or grandfather. Born in a generation in which the Apocalyptic visions of Ezekiel had introduced a new form of prophetic utterance, his prophecies are marked by a similar characteristic. The influence of his Babylonian life,

[1] Hag. ii. 3. Ewald thinks he had seen the first Temple. [2] Zech. ii. 4.
[3] In Ezra v. 1; vi. 14, he is called the son of Iddo; in Zech. i. 1-7, the grandson

moreover, is seen in his imagery and allusions. Thus he uses the regnal years of the Great King for his dates,[1] and, among other Eastern colourings, introduces in his third vision the Persian custom of clothing a person accused, in soiled garments, to be exchanged for white when he is acquitted. It has, however, been very widely held, by calm and competent critics, that, as in some other recognized cases, portions written by other prophets of a different period, have been added, perhaps through inadvertence, to the chapters actually to be ascribed to Zechariah. To the end of the eighth chapter, it is held, we have the words of the prophet of the Return, while chapters nine to eleven are assigned to an unknown author, contemporary with the prophet Hosea, during the last period of the Northern Kingdom, and chapters twelve to fourteen are regarded as dating from the years just before the destruction of Jerusalem. The mention of teraphim and diviners in the middle portion appears, as has been noticed, to support the view that it dates from before the fall of Samaria, and some other expressions seem most easily referred to that period, but scholars are divided on the point, and some still hold that the book was entirely written by the prophet whose name it bears.

It was in the second year of Darius Hystaspis, on the first day of the sixth month, September or October, B.C. 521, that Haggai first presented himself before Zerubbabel and Joshua, to stir both them and the people to renewed efforts towards the rebuilding of the Temple. The exaggerated hopes of the first period of the Return had died away. Instead of the glorious times they had expected, only trouble and disappointment had befallen them. It

[1] Zech. i. 7-11.

seemed as if they had been deceived by the prophets. Their zeal died away under such discouragement. After fifteen years, the altar on Mount Moriah, and the laying of the foundation stone, were the only results of their lofty anticipations that a Temple grander than that of Solomon would speedily rise before them. But if they had been disappointed in this direction, their material circumstances had improved. Debarred from restoring the national sanctuary, but free in other respects, they had devoted themselves to worldly affairs. Fine houses, owned by the richer colonists, had risen among the ruins of Jerusalem, and this prosperity had still further lowered their religious tone. Warnings of the displeasure of God at their apathy and spiritual decline were not, however, wanting; for droughts had visited the land, the heavens had been "stayed from dew," and the earth "from her fruit." But they still urged that the time for rebuilding the House of God had not yet come;[1] fresh permission, they maintained, being required from the Great King. This hypocritical plea Haggai boldly met by a stern attack on their insincerity.

"I. 4. Is it time for you, yourselves,—cried he,[2]—to live in your houses, panelled (with costly woods), while this house—(the House of God)—lies waste? 5. Now, therefore, thus says Jehovah of Hosts: CONSIDER YOUR WAYS! 6. Ye have sown much, and brought in little. Ye eat, but it does not satisfy you; ye drink, but it does not quench your thirst; ye clothe yourselves, but it does not serve to warm you; and he that earns, finds his gain vanish as if put into a bag with holes. 7. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, CONSIDER YOUR WAYS! 8. Go up to the hill-country, and bring timber and build My house, and I will have pleasure in it, and I will be honoured, says Jehovah. 9. Ye looked for much (from your fields), and it came to little, and when ye brought it home I blew on it. Why? says Jehovah of Hosts. 'Because of My

[1] Hag. i. 2. [2] Hag. i. 4, 9.

House which lies waste, while ye, every one, run to (build) his own house. 10. For this,[1] the heaven has kept back from yielding dew, and the earth from yielding fruit, 11. and I have called up a drought on land and hill, and on the corn, and new wine, and oil, and on all that the ground yields, and on men and cattle, and all the labour of your hands.' "

Haggai took it for granted that no new permission to build the Temple was needed, since the one given by Cyrus had never been withdrawn, though the work had been forbidden. Fortunately, the people and their leading men accepted this view, and resolved to act on the counsel of Haggai, to which they listened with reverent awe. In about three weeks the sound of labour once more rose from the Temple hill.[2]

Four weeks later, the venerable prophet again presented himself before the people and their leaders. The walls of the Temple were now being rapidly built; but as they rose, it was evident that the new building would be far less magnificent than the old. Most of the citizens were poor, and the few rich were, in too many cases, indifferent. But if the gloom of some, and the coldness of others, were calculated to dispirit the workers, Haggai, cheerful and confident, was ready to encourage them by the promise of a better time, when their brethren in other lands, and even the heathen, would interest themselves in the great undertaking, and cause the glory of this second Temple to be greater than that of the first.

"II. 3. Who is left among you that saw this House in its former glory? And how see ye it now? does it not appear as nothing in your eyes in comparison?

"4. Yet, be of good heart, O Zerubbabel, says Jehovah; be of good heart, O Joshua, the high priest, son of Josedech, and be of good heart

[1] **Hag. i. 10, 11; ii. 3, 4.** [2] Hag. i. 14, 15.

all ye people of the land, says Jehovah, and work! For I am with you, says Jehovah of Hosts. 5. The covenant that I made with you when ye came out of Egypt,[1] stands firm, and My Spirit remains in your midst; fear ye not! 6. For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: it will be only a little while till I shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, 7. and till I shake all nations, and the wealth of all will come hither, and I will fill this House with splendour, says Jehovah of Hosts. 8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says Jehovah of Hosts. 9. The glory of this house will be greater than that of the former, says Jehovah of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace, says Jehovah of Hosts."

Three months after the community had recommenced work on the Temple, another prophetic message came, through Haggai, to the people. Their faint-heartedness was gone, and they toiled with zeal and energy. It was now desirable to confirm their fidelity by an assurance that, if it continued, the blessings of the fields, which had been withheld from them, would be restored. The drought and trials of the past had been a punishment for their neglect of the House of God, and would now be removed. It was about the end of November, when the sowing of winter grain was over, and the early rains had begun; in themselves an earnest of the Divine blessing.

"II. 11. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts—said Haggai—Ask now the priests for instruction in the Law, saying: 12. "If a man carry holy flesh of offerings[2] in the skirt of his garment, and touch bread, or cooked food,[3] or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, will what it touches become holy?" And the priests answered, 'No.'[4]

"13. Then Haggai said, If a person made unclean by touching a dead body touch any of these (things just named), shall what he touches become unclean? And the priests said: 'It does become un-

[1] **Hag. ii. 5-13.** [2] Jer. xi. 15.

[3] Gen. xxv. 29, or 2 Kings iv. 38.

[4] Lev. vi. 20 says that the skirt in which consecrated flesh was carried was thereby, itself, "holy," but it could not impart holiness by what was touched by it. The priests, therefore, were right in their answer.

clean.'[1] 14. Then answered Haggai.[2] Thus is this people and this nation before Me, says Jehovah, and thus is all the work of their hands.[3] And that which they offer there is unclean. 15. And, now, turn your thoughts from this day backward, to the time before stone was laid on stone in the Temple of Jehovah. 16. Before that, when a man came to a heap of (corn which he expected to be) twenty measures, there were only ten; and when he came to the vat of the wine-press, (expecting) to draw off fifty measures of wine, there were only twenty. 17. I smote you with blight, mildew, and hail, in all the work of your hands, yet ye turned not to Me, says Jehovah! 18. But, now, turn back your thoughts from this day to the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, the day on which the foundation of the Temple of Jehovah was laid—think on the matter. 19. Was there seed in the barn before that day? Were not vine and fig-tree and pomegranate and olive alike unfruitful? But from this day, when the building is recommenced, I will bless you!"

On the same day Haggai received another message to deliver to Zerubbabel. It ran thus:

"II. 21. I (Jehovah) will shake the heavens and the earth, 22. and I will overturn the throne of kingdoms, and destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen, and destroy the chariots and those who ride in them, and (overwhelm) the horses and their riders, every one by the sword of the other. 23. In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says Jehovah, and make thee like a signet ring (on My hand);[4] for I have chosen thee, says Jehovah of Hosts."[5]

[1] Num. xix. 22. [2] **Hag. ii. 14–23.**

[3] The raising an altar on their return was a "holy" act, but their delay in building the Temple was wrong, and the good could not make the wrong change its character any more than the "holy flesh" could communicate its goodness to the "common" or unconsecrated food. Moreover, this sin took away the good of their former act—the raising the altar—as the touch of a person defiled by a dead body polluted that with which it came into contact. They had lost their "cleanness" before God, and might justly be punished by the drought, etc. But now that they had recommenced the Temple, this state of things no longer existed, and God was free once more to bless the land, which had suffered for their sake.

[4] The signet ring is never laid aside by its wearer, but is especially valued by him. Gen. xxxviii. 18.

[5] It is possible that the Hebrew prince may have asked Haggai as to his safety in the midst of the political troubles of the empire and that this is the answer.

The discourses of Haggai had been delivered between the sixth and ninth months of the second year of Darius—September to November, B.C. 521—and, as we have seen, had made a profound impression. This was deepened by the appearance of his young contemporary, Zechariah, in the month of October—the eighth month [1]—while the earlier words of his aged fellow-prophet were still fresh in all minds, and his later ones had not yet been spoken. Three months later,[2] in January, B.C. 520, he came before the people again; but an interval of twenty-two months elapsed before his next address.[3]

In the true prophetic spirit, Zechariah, like Haggai, dwells entirely on the moral hindrances to the rebuilding of the Temple. The plots of enemies do not trouble him. Fifteen years had passed since the Return, and the walls of the sanctuary were not yet raised, while the city itself was being laboriously, and in some cases splendidly, restored. Haggai, a month before, had striven to rouse his contemporaries, by predicting that, notwithstanding appearances, the glory of the second House would be even greater than that of the first,[4] but his words had had little effect. Zechariah, therefore, warns them to take a lesson from the fate of their fathers. *Their* disobedience to the prophets had been their ruin; let no such result follow now from a similar cause. The drought and the opposition from without, shewed that God was displeased; let them seek to regain His favour. He thus begins:

"I. 2. Jehovah [5] has been very wroth with your fathers, 3. therefore say unto these, (their sons); thus says Jehovah of Hosts: 'Turn ye to Me, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will turn to you, says Jehovah of

[1] Zech. i. 1. [2] Zech. i. 7. [3] Zech. vii. 1.
[4] Hag. ii. 9. [5] Zech. i. 2, 3.

Hosts.' 4. Be not like your fathers,' to whom the prophets of former days cried, saying, 'Thus says Jehovah of Hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways and from your evil doings.' But they did not hear or give heed to Me, says Jehovah. 5. Your fathers—where are they? And the prophets, did (even they) live for ever? But (though all these, alike, are dead), 6. My words and My commands which I commissioned My servants the prophets (to declare), have they not overtaken your fathers, so that they turned and said, 'As Jehovah of Hosts decreed to do to us, according to our ways and doings, so has He dealt with us'?"

Three months later Zechariah announced a series of prophetic night-visions with which he had been favoured, thus repeating the peculiar characteristic of Ezekiel, which was, hereafter, to create so widely extended a school of Jewish Apocalyptic literature. The whole succession of visions, seven in number, came, we are told, in the same night, and all alike are designed to confirm the prediction of Haggai, uttered two months before, that Jehovah would assuredly bless and honour His people, if they were faithful to Him.

In the first vision,[2] a rider on a red horse, followed by others on red, speckled, and white horses, appeared to the prophet among a clump of myrtles,[3] growing in a hollow, and they were explained to be those sent out by Jehovah through the earth, which they had found still and peaceful, with no signs, anywhere, of that "shaking of the nations," and overthrow of the enemies of Israel, predicted by Haggai.[4] On hearing this, an angel, who stood by, breaks out into a supplication to God to have pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, which had now lain

[1] Zech. i. 4-6.

[2] Zech. i. 8-17.

[3] Except in Zechariah, the myrtle is mentioned only in Isa. xli. 19 : lv. 13. It grows all over Western Asia. I have seen it in many places in Palestine and Syria.

[4] Hag. ii. 7.

waste seventy years. Forthwith Jehovah answers in "good and comfortable words," which the angel embodies in a command that Zechariah should cry aloud to His people, as follows:

"I. 14. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts:[1] I am full of loving zeal for Jerusalem and Zion, 15. but of indignation at the heathen dwelling in proud security; for when I was only a little angry with Israel, they added to his affliction. 16. Therefore, thus says Jehovah: I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies; My House shall be rebuilt in her, saith Jehovah of Hosts; and the (measuring) line shall be stretched out over (the soil of) Jerusalem. 17. Cry, moreover, and say, Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem."

It was thus foreshadowed that God would visit with His anger, the heathen, now so secure, and renew His favour to Judah. The second vision illustrated His deliverance of Israel in the past, and his overthrow of their foes in the future. Four horns, the symbols of power, rose before the prophet, the emblems of the kingdoms that had "scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem,"[2] but forthwith appeared also four craftsmen, to the terror of the horns, to cast them down.

Next was seen a man with a measuring line in his hand,[3] as if to measure the circuit of Jerusalem. He refrains from doing so, however, because the new city would be unwalled, like the open country, to contain the multitude of its population and cattle; Jehovah Himself serving at once as its glory and its defence, in the absence of bulwarks and fortifications.[4] With such prospects before Judah, it was incomprehensible to the prophet that so many of the exiles

[1] **Zech. i. 14-17.** [2] Zech. i. 18-21. [3] Zech. ii. 1-5.
[4] Jerusalem, though it had walls, in the end extended itself widely on every side over the neighbouring hills. Wright's *Zechariah*, p. 36.

should still remain in Babylonia. Hence, in the fulness of his joy, he lovingly invites them to seek a place in the favoured city of their fathers.

"II. 6. Hark ye,[1] hark, and flee from the land of the North, says Jehovah, for I will spread forth your dwellings to the four winds of heaven.[2] 7. O Zion, deliver thyself; thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8. For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: He has sent me (His Angel)[3] to the nations who spoiled you, to win glory (for you, at their cost), for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. 9. For, lo, I[4] will shake my hand over them, and they will be a prey to those who served them, and ye shall know that Jehovah of Hosts has sent me. 10. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I am coming, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, says Jehovah. 11. And many nations will join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and will be for a people to Me, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts has sent me to thee. 12. And Jehovah will take possession of Judah, (as) His portion in the Holy Land, and will choose Jerusalem again. 13. Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah, for He has raised himself up from (His repose in) His holy dwelling (in the heavens, to effect this)."

The more serious among the citizens of Judah, apparently feared that their guilt was too great for the Almighty to pardon, and that this was the cause of their misadventures since their return. To remove such a thought, a fourth vision was vouchsafed to the prophet. Joshua, the high priest,[5] as the representative of the whole people, is seen standing, in soiled robes, like a criminal, before the Angel of Jehovah, with "the adversary"[6] at his right hand, to accuse him. The accusation, however, not only fails; its author is rebuked for making it, by Jehovah, "who delights in Jerusalem." "Is not this (man or com-

[1] **Zech. ii. 6-13.** [2] The future vast extension of Jerusalem is referred to.
[3] Zech. ii. 8. [4] The Angel. [5] Zech. iii. 1-10.
[6] The word is "the Satan" or Adversary, and thus it is not a proper name, but an official title.

munity)," it is asked, "a brand plucked from the fire (of exile)?" The soiled robes are then taken off, at the command of the Angel, and robes of honour put on, a pure priestly turban being set, besides, on Joshua's head; the Angel, moreover, promises him, in the name of Jehovah, that if he walked in God's ways and was zealous for His law, he would remain the judge of His House and the guardian of His courts, and would go out and in among the Angels standing there. He and the other dignitaries of the priesthood who sit with him, men of rank and note, are to take heed to what they have heard; for Jehovah is about to bring forth His Servant, the Sprout, or Branch (of David)—that is, the Heaven-sent, anointed, Head of the nation. Nor is there any fear of God neglecting Zion, for His Providence watches its interests like so many eyes; nay, a stone seen in the vision, as an emblem of the newly founded Theocracy, has seven eyes upon it, and was being prepared by the hand of God Himself, perhaps for the top-stone of the New Temple, in the glorious days coming. The whole is, of course, only a vision, but the lesson was clear. The "Branch," who was to bring triumph to Israel, would assuredly come, and the punishment for the past iniquity of the land would be removed in one day, when He appeared. A blissful time would then begin, when each would call his neighbour to sit under his vine and fig-tree, in sweet and peaceful security.

A new vision followed at a short interval, this time referring to Zerubbabel, as the one before had referred to Joshua, the high priest. There appeared a seven-branched lamp,[1] like that in the Mosaic Tabernacle, with two olive-trees beside it; the symbol, it may be, of the

[1] Zech. iv. 15.

glorious light which was hereafter[1] to shine forth from the Temple, or, perhaps, from the splendour streaming from the Temple itself.[2] The lesson it was to teach was conveyed by the attendant Angel.

"IV. 6. This[3] is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit!' says Jehovah of Hosts. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain (of difficulties), before Zerubbabel? Become a plain: for He—Jehovah—will bring forth the top-stone (of the New Temple), amidst joyful cries of 'Grace, grace (from God), be on it.'"

He had laid its foundation, and He would finish it. No one had a right to despise the past day of small things, for the seven mystic eyes, the visionary emblems of God's watchful providence over all the earth, had already seen with joy the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, when the foundation stone was laid in the presence of Joshua,[4] and this was an earnest that what God had begun, He would complete.

The Temple thus to be gloriously finished would be marked by the reign of holiness. A flying scroll of a book, of huge size, appeared—thirty feet long and fifteen feet broad—the portentous embodiment of the curse of the Almighty on all sinners in the land. The false swearer and the thief would be driven away before the breath of the Divine wrath.[5] Nor was this all; wickedness of every kind would be purged from the bounds now sanctified by the presence of Jehovah in His restored Temple. A huge

[1] Keil.

[2] Ewald, Steiner, and Eichhorn think the lamp a symbol of the New Temple, which was to spring from the efforts of Joshua and Zerubbabel, of whom the two olive-trees were emblems. Keil more justly considers these the representatives of the spiritual agencies by which God brings His heavenly influence to bear on the Church.

[3] Zech. iv. 6-7. [4] Zech. iii. 9. [5] Zech. v. 1-4.

vessel was also seen in the vision,[1] the emblem of the fate awaiting all evil doers, for on a great round disk of lead which had covered its mouth being lifted, Wickedness, personified as a woman, was seen sitting within, as in a prison, or like a wild beast in its cage. This vessel, two winged female forms presently lifted from the ground, and bore away to Babylonia, the symbol, in those days, of the land of uncleanness and evil, and thus Judah was purged from its presence.[2]

That such modes of presenting spiritual lessons should have ever been popular and intelligible, marks the immense difference between the East and the West. Oriental fancy delights in mysterious imagery and parable, as vehicles of religious truth. The later Hebrew literature, especially, shews these characteristics, but isolated examples of them occur earlier, as in the vision of Micaiah,[3] portions of the introduction to the Book of Proverbs, and the Book of Job as a whole. In the age before Christ, it had become the favourite style of composition, as is seen in the Jewish Sibylline verses, the Book of Henoch, the Book of Jubilees, the Assumption of Isaiah, and the Assumption of Moses, and it has been followed, to a very large extent, by the Rabbis, in later ages. To the Western mind, however, such modes of writing must always remain in great part unintelligible; and, indeed, the visions of the prophets, from Ezekiel downwards, have been frankly proclaimed by the Rabbis themselves as beyond full human comprehension. It is vain therefore to attempt to explain the obscure references of those of Zechariah.

This applies in its fullest sense to the seventh and last

[1] An "Ephah" = the largest Hebrew dry measure. Keil, *Zacharja*, p. 573.
[2] Zech. v. 5–11.
[3] 1 Kings xxii. 19, ff.

vision[1] of that eventful night. Four chariots—whether of war or peace is not stated—were seen issuing from between two mountains of copper, which have been variously interpreted as vague symbols of the protection extended by God to His people, or of the powers of the world, or of Mounts Olivet and Zion, with the Valley of Jehoshaphat lying between. Ingenuity has exhausted itself in trying to assign a meaning to the colours of the horses in the different chariots; but they may have served, after all, only to distinguish the one chariot from the other. Sent forth to the north and south, and through the earth, they flew, swift as the wind, on their errand, respecting which we have only the mysterious statement of the attendant Angel, that those sent to the north had appeased the Divine anger on that region; a hint, perhaps, that they were commissioned to break up the quiet and haughty security of the heathen kingdoms, and bring on them the judgments of God foretold by the prophets, as the sign of the approach of the Anointed One.[2]

Night had now passed; but an incident throwing momentary light on these long dead years took place next morning. Some Jews of the Captivity had come from Babylon, on a visit to their brethren, apparently as a deputation from the great body of exiles who voluntarily remained in Babylonia. They had been hospitably lodged in the house of one Josiah, at Jerusalem, and had brought a tribute of gold and silver with them, to express the sympathy felt for Judah by their brethren on the banks of the Chebar. Of this silver and gold, Zechariah was directed to have crowns made, primarily, for the head of Joshua the high priest, but ultimately to be laid up in the Temple

[1] Zech. vi. 1–8. [2] Zech. vi. 8. Hag. ii. 7.

when it was finished, as a memorial before God of those whose loving bounty had provided the materials. The prophet was also commissioned to say to Joshua, in words which look beyond Zerubbabel to the expected Messiah, or anointed head of the nation:

"VI. 12. Behold,[1] a man shall rise, and his name shall be The Sprout or Branch of David, and under him will all things prosper,[2] and he will build the Temple of Jehovah. 13. He, even he, shall build it, and he will bear kingly glory,[3] and sit and rule on his throne, and he will also be a priest on his throne, and there will be a counsel of peace between him and Jehovah."[4]

Help, of which the crowns were an earnest, would be sent, moreover, from distant lands, as had been so often predicted, if Judah loyally obeyed the voice of its God,[5] for all the visions and hopes of the prophet, in keeping with the longings of his age, look forward to a time of great national glory under a descendant of David, who would unite the kingly glory with that of the priesthood.

Nearly two years elapsed before the next incident recorded. In December, B.C. 519,[6] a deputation from the inhabitants of Bethel,[7] the ancient seat of the calf-worship, came to Jerusalem to entreat the favour of God for their town, and also to inquire from the priests and prophets, of whom we know only Haggai and Zechariah, whether the fast in the fifth month, to commemorate the destruction of the Temple, should still be continued. Darius had just issued a new decree,[8] ratifying the earlier permission of Cyrus, to rebuild the Temple, which had already, for some time,

[1] **Zech. vi. 12, 13.**
[2] Ewald. Steiner.
[3] The word used is that appropriated to kingly majesty.
[4] This seems the true meaning of the phrase.
[5] Zech. vi. 15.
[6] Kislew.
[7] Zech. vii. 2. "The house of God" should be untranslated, as the proper name "Bethel."
[8] Ezra vi. 1.

been rising from its ashes[1] through the influence of the prophets. This activity, however, had not been unopposed. The Persian governor of Syria and Phœnicia—the division of the empire west of the Euphrates[2]—with his subordinate officials, sent for the names of those by whose authority the Temple and the city wall were being restored, and demanded the right they had to take such steps. But, though this led to correspondence, the work continued steadily to advance. Meanwhile, the Persian governor had transmitted to Darius a report of what was doing. He and his staff, he said, had gone to Jerusalem, and found that the Temple was being rebuilt, on the strength of a decree of Cyrus. Search having been made in consequence, at Ecbatana, in Media, one of the Persian capitals,[3] the action of the Jews had been vindicated. The decree had been found in the royal palace, and the hostile governor of the West was therefore ordered to allow the work to proceed, and to defray the expense from the imperial treasury. He was, moreover, to provide the requisites for the sacrifices and offerings of the new sanctuary, that the loyal prayers of the worshippers might be secured.[4]

The law of Moses enjoined only one day of fasting in the year—that of the great Day of Atonement,[5] but Israel had long been in the habit of holding fasts for any great national calamity.[6] In Babylon, four had, apparently, been regularly kept each year—on the anniversaries of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans,[7] of the burning of the city and Temple,[8] of the murder of Gedaliah,[9] and of the beginning of the siege of the Holy City by Nebuchadnez-

[1] Ezra iv. 24 ; v. 2. [2] Ezra v. 3. [3] Ezra vi. 2.
[4] Ezra vi. 1-12. [5] Lev. xxiii. 26-32.
[6] Judg. xx. 26. 1 Sam. vii. 6 ; xxxi. 13. Joel ii. 15. Isa. lviii. 3-12.
[7] Jer. lii. 6, 7. [8] 2 Kings xxv. 8. Jer. lii. 12. [9] Jer. xli. 2, 3.

zar.[1] But that which commemorated the burning of the city and Temple seemed, to the people of Bethel, out of place, now that both were rising from their ashes.[2] It was asked, therefore, if it should be continued.

The answer vouchsafed was a striking illustration of the worthlessness, in the eyes of the prophets, of mere outward forms, apart from the spiritual state of those observing them. Not only the men of Bethel, but all the people of the land, were told, in effect, that fasting, like eating and drinking, was their concern, not God's. They were free to fast if they found it of advantage, but their doing so rested with themselves. To lament the burning of the Temple in the fifth month, or the murder of Gedaliah in the seventh, was left to their own pleasure. What God cared for was, that they should obey His words, spoken by the prophets in the days of the glory of Jerusalem and Judah, when the territory of the kingdom extended to the Negeb and the Maritime Plain,[3] now held by the Edomites and the Philistines.

The essence of what was thus uttered to their fathers, Zechariah tells us, was that they should—

"VII. 9. Judge righteous judgment,[4] and shew love and compassion every one to the other. 10. Do not oppress the widow, or the fatherless, the alien or the poor, and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in his heart. 11. But, (he adds), your fathers refused to hearken, and gave an unwilling shoulder to God's yoke, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12. Yea, they hardened their hearts like a diamond, not to hear the Law, and the words sent by Jehovah of Hosts, through His Spirit, by the earlier prophets. Therefore there came great wrath from Jehovah of Hosts. 13. And since

[1] 2 Kings xxv. 1. Jer. lii. 4. These fasts were held respectively on the ninth of the fourth month, and the seventh and tenth of the fifth, seventh, and tenth months See Zech. viii. 19.

[2] Hag. i. 4. [3] Ezra vii. 1-8. [4] **Zech. vii. 9-13.**

they would not hear when He called, so, (said He), 'They shall call and I will not hear, 14. and I will scatter them with a tempest,[1] among all the nations whom they do not know.' Thus the land became desolate behind them, (when they were carried off to exile), no one passing through or returning to it: for (the wickedness of) your fathers made the pleasant land a desolation."

It had been thus in the past, but better days had come. The newly awakened zeal of the people for Jehovah had won back His favour, and He would bless them beyond measure, if they honoured His Law in the future. Portions of at least two addresses, to cheer the community by such assurances, still remain. In the first, Zechariah speaks thus:

"VIII. 2. I, Jehovah of Hosts, am exceeding jealous for the honour of Zion, yea, jealous beyond measure. 3. I have returned to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and it will be called a city of the truth, the mountain of Jehovah of Hosts, the Holy Mountain. 4. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man staff in hand for very age, 5. and the streets will be full of boys and girls playing in them. 6. If this be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, (alive) in those days, shall it be marvellous in My eyes? says Jehovah of Hosts. 7. Thus says He: Behold I am about to save My people from the east and from the west; 8. and I will bring them hither, and they will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be My people, and I shall be their God, in truth and righteousness.

"9. Thus says Jehovah of Hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye who hear these words, from the mouth of the prophets now living, in these days, when the House of Jehovah has been founded, even the Temple, that it might be rebuilt. 10. For before these days there were no wages for men, or hire for cattle, and there was no peace to him who went out or came in, because of the enemy,[2] for I let loose all men against each other.

"11. But now am I not as I was in former days, towards the remnant of this people? says Jehovah of Hosts. 12. For (the plant[3] of

[1] **Zech. vii. 14; viii. 1-12.**

[2] The passage shews vividly the wretched condition of the first period of the Return.

[3] Literally, "seed."

peace), the vine, will yield its fruit, and the earth its increase, and the heavens their dew; and I will give all this for an inheritance to the remnant of this people. 13. And it shall be,[1] that, as your fate (sent for your punishment from above) was used among the nations as a curse (they might invoke on each other), so ye shall be used to bless by (for the Divine favour shewn you): fear not; let your hands be strong!

"14. For thus says Jehovah of Hosts: As I resolved to punish you, when your fathers provoked Me to wrath, and I did not repent from My purpose; 15. so I have once more resolved, in these days, to do good to Jerusalem and to the House of Judah. Fear not! 16. These are the things ye shall do (to secure His blessing); speak truth every man to his neighbour, let your judges judge according to truth and peace, in your gates;[2] 17. plot no evil in your hearts against your neighbour, and hate the false oath;—for I hate all these things, says Jehovah."

The question of public fasts seems to have still agitated the community, notwithstanding Zechariah's utterance on the subject. He therefore took an opportunity of reverting to it. The four fasts held in Babylon would henceforth be turned to feasts, if they loved truth and peace, and acted up to the Divine requirements.

"VIII. 20. It will yet be, that nations, and the people of many cities, will come (as pilgrims to Jerusalem); 21. and the inhabitants of one town will go to those of another, and say, 'Let us intreat the favour of Jehovah, and seek Jehovah of Hosts;' 'I will go also.' 22. And many peoples and strong nations will come to seek Jehovah of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to intreat His favour. And 23. in those days ten men, from all the languages of the nations, will lay hold on the skirt of a Jew, and say, 'Let us go up (to Jerusalem) with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

The zeal and industry of the authorities of Judah, having once been fairly roused by the fervent energy of the prophets, sustained itself nobly till the new Temple was finished. Four years sufficed for this, so great was the

[1] Zech. viii. 13-23. [2] Where the open-air courts of the East were held.

enthusiasm, and so efficient the help from the Persian authorities, after Darius had favoured the undertaking. At last, in March of the year B.C. 516, the sixth year of Darius, twenty years after the Return, the sanctuary was ready for consecration, though details in its ornamentation seem to have been added so late as the reign of Artaxerxes, the next Persian king.[1]

We know very little of the building thus raised, after so long a struggle with open enemies, apathetic friends, and meagre resources. It seems, with its forecourts, to have occupied the same space as that of Solomon. The size of the edifice itself, if the measurements given in the decree of Cyrus were followed,[2] was larger than that of its predecessor.[3] A wall of three rows of squared stone, coped with planed beams, enclosed the wide space of the Temple grounds.[4] The Holy of Holies, which was shut off by a great veiling curtain,[5] was entirely empty, but a point of the natural rock, projecting three finger breadths above the floor, and now enclosed as the central glory of the "Dome of the Rock,"[6] took the place of the ancient ark and furnished a rest on which the high priest could lay his pan of incense, on the great Day of Atonement.[7] The ark was supposed either to have been hidden by Jeremiah, in Mount Nebo,[8] or to have been carried to heaven[9] till the appearance of the Messiah. The cherubim, the tables of stone, the urn of manna, and the rod of Aaron, were similarly absent—a state of things anticipated by Jeremiah in

[1] Ezra vi. 14, 15. [2] Ezra vi. 3, ff.

[3] The only notice we have of the size of the Second Temple, besides the incidental allusions in Ezra, is found in Jos., *Ant.*, XV. xi. 1.

[4] Ezra vi. 4. [5] 1 Macc. i. 22; iv. 51.

[6] See *Recovery of Jerusalem, passim.*

[7] Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, V. v. 5. Joma, v. 2. Riehm, pp. 210, 1635.

[8] Macc. ii. 5. *Treasures of the Talmud*, p. 32. This vol. p. 208. [9] Rev. xi. 19.

his prediction, that when the nobler presence of Jehovah was vouchsafed under the regenerated Theocracy, men would no longer think of the ark.[1] The golden shields that had hung in the outer chambers were gone, and so was the Urim and Thummim, which the high priest had worn over his official robes. As in the Tabernacle, there was only one golden lamp in the Holy Place, behind the veil,[2] a table of shewbread, and the incense altar, plated



THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK, AND OTHER SPOIL FROM THE TEMPLE.—Arch of Titus.

with gold,[3] with golden censers, and a goodly array of the ancient vessels of precious metal, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, but restored by Cyrus. There were two forecourts,[4] in the inner of which stood the huge square altar of burnt offering, of unhewn stones[5]—thirty feet each way, and fifteen high, with an approach by an inclined plane. A great basin, for the necessary ablutions of the priests, stood

[1] Jer. iii. 16; xxxi. 31. Only the tables of stone had been in Solomon's Temple. 1 Kings viii. 9. 2 Chron. v. 9. [2] 1 Macc. iv. 51.
[3] 1 Macc. i. 23; iv. 49. [4] 1 Macc. i. 38 (48 in Greek). [5] 1 Macc. iv. 44.

near it.[1] The court was bordered by convenient store chambers and cells,[2] and by chambers for the priests,[3] the whole being adorned by pillared porches.[4] A bridge led, on the west, over the valley between Moriah and Zion,[5] and various gates permitted free entrance and egress at different points.

In the former Temple, numerous trees, "planted in the courts of the Lord,"[6] had offered a welcome shade to the throngs of worshippers, but none were permitted in the courts of the Second Temple, perhaps from dread of having anything like a heathen grove near the sanctuary. Another contrast was no less striking. No longer its own master, the dependence of the community on a foreign State was shewn in the erection of a military tower or castle at the north-west of the precincts,[7] by the Persian authorities, as a residence for the governor, and, if necessary, a military post. This was the building known during the Roman domination as the Fortress Antonia, the Baris of the Asmoneans. Over the eastern gate of the Temple space another sign of foreign rule was seen, in a sculptured representation of the Persian capital, from which the gate was known as that of Susa. For the first time, also, a space was provided, by cutting off part of the outer court, for heathen proselytes, who, while worshippers of Jehovah, had not entirely conformed to Judaism.

The exact date of the consecration of the new Temple is not stated, but it was doubtless a time of great rejoicing. The priests and Levites in their respective "courses," or successive periods of service, and the people at large, were

[1] Sirach l. 3. [2] Ezra viii. 29; x. 6. Neh. iii. 30; x. 37; xii. 44; xiii. 5.
[3] 1 Macc. iv. 38-48. [4] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. iv. 7; XIV. xvi. 2.
[5] Jos., *Ant.*, XIV. iv. 2. *Bell. Jud.*, I. vii. 2.
[6] Jos., *c. Ap.*, i. 22. [7] Neh. ii. 8; vii. 2.

at last of one mind in their loyalty to the ancient faith. A sin offering for all Israel,[1] of a hundred oxen, two hundred rams, and four hundred lambs, smoked on the altar, with twelve goats, in addition, to represent the twelve tribes; as if in fond hope that the whole captivity of North and South would, some day, reassemble round the one religious centre.

In due time followed the celebration of the Passover, the first after the Return, on the 14th of Nisan, our April, its ancient date; the seven days of unleavened bread succeeding, at its close. No ceremonial laxity was any longer permitted. The priests and Levites, without exception, had purified themselves strictly, according to "the book of Moses." The exclusive right of slaying the paschal lambs for priest and laity alike, as well as for their own order, was assumed by the Levites. Anciently, every head of a family had done so for his own household;[2] at the Passover of Hezekiah, the Levites killed the lambs for all who had not legally purified themselves;[3] but from the days of Josiah, the great restorer of Judaism in its narrow sense, and indeed its virtual founder, the usage had been introduced which now became the permanent rule.[4]

From this time, the wide recognition of Jerusalem as the only religious centre of Judaism, and the strictness with which the Levitical precepts were enforced, steadily increased. Not only those who had come from Babylon, but numbers of the survivors of the North and South Kingdoms, whose fathers had escaped deportation to Assyria or the Euphrates, and even the dispersed from other lands, came up to the Passover. Scattered families,

[1] Ezra vi. 16–18.
[2] Exod. xii. 6.
[3] 2 Chron. xxx. 17.
[4] 2 Chron. xxxv. 11–14.

or small communities, of pure Jews, still guarded their separate nationality and hereditary faith in remote and sequestered parts of the land, amidst the heathen or half-heathen population by which it was mainly occupied. Galilee sent up its representatives of the Ten Tribes; the remnant saved from Nineveh. All alike, henceforth, separated themselves absolutely from the heathenism around them, and accepted Jerusalem as the religious centre of the race. The envy of Ephraim had departed, and Judah no longer vexed Ephraim.[1]

Such a festivity, so full of hope and so tender with associations of the long past, was a fitting close to the anxieties and alarms of the twenty years it happily ended. Jubilant Psalms, bearing in the Greek version the names of Haggai and Zechariah,[2] embody in the hallelujahs echoing through their successive strophes, the gratitude to Jehovah felt by the new-born nation. All nature is invoked to praise the great name of God, who had "raised up those that were bowed down," and had dealt "with Jacob and Israel, as He had not with any other nation." "Young men and maidens, old men and children," are summoned to unite in exalting His glory, in the old centre of their national religion. The sound of the trumpet, the psaltery, and the harp resounded in the Temple courts, and the timbrel and cymbals led on dances of maidens in the spaces around. It was meet that the formal re-establishment of the Theocracy should be celebrated amidst universal rejoicing.

[1] Isa. xi. 13.

[2] Pss. cxliv., cxlv., cxlvi., cxlvii., cxlviii.

CHAPTER XIX.

QUEEN ESTHER.

THE interval, from the Return in B.C. 536 to the completion of the Temple in B.C. 516, had been momentous in the great world. In B.C. 529, Cyrus had fallen ingloriously, in a distant war, and had been succeeded by his son Cambyses, whose reign was signalized, at its beginning, by the secret murder of his brother Bardes, and, near its close, by that of one of his sisters, who was also his wife, and had dared to weep for her brother's fate. Determined to reconquer Egypt, his reign was chiefly spent in the Nile countries, till, on his march back to the East, in B.C. 522, he killed himself in a fit of despair, in Syria; remorse for the murder of his sister and brother, the outburst of revolts, and the excitement of his Egyptian campaigns and disasters, having unhinged his mind.[1] During his reign, the colony at Jerusalem must have been constantly kept in agitation, by the passage and repassage of troops along the coast, and by the anxieties of the war. Darius Hystas-

[1] Ebers paints his ferocity admirably in *Eine Ægypt. Königstochter*. As I have already pointed out, Cambyses, like his father, was a polytheist. Egyptian monuments shew that the story told by Herodotus, of his deriding the Egyptian gods, destroying their images, and stabbing the sacred bull, Apis, was quite incorrect. He is described by the inscriptions of the priests themselves as their friend, the adorer of their gods, and the benefactor of their temples. The very bull he is said to have slain has been discovered, as a mummy, in a huge sarcophagus of granite, on the outside of which Cambyses kneels before the sacred beast, which we are told, in an inscription, was honoured with due funeral rites, Cambyses himself taking part in them.

pis, who succeeded him after a short interval, when the false Bardes, who had usurped the throne, had been overthrown, spent his reign in almost constant wars, to quell the risings of province after province, from Herat to the Grecian Archipelago. In the very year when the Temple was finished (B.C. 516), Babylon had to be wrested by a Persian general from an Armenian prince who had seized it; the Great King himself being in Egypt.[1]

The reign of Darius was, however, especially notable as that during which the great struggle between Asiatic barbarism and Western civilization, after having lasted for generations, was virtually decided. Determined, like Cyrus, to conquer the Greeks, in whose hands in those ages were the destinies of the world, his triumph would have extended the despotism of the East into Europe, and the dawning liberty and progress of humanity would thus have been extinguished in night. But this was prevented for ever by the battle of Marathon, in B.C. 490—the Greeks, by their success on that great day, achieving the victory of freedom for all after ages in the Western continent. Modern history began when the Persian hosts were driven back to their ships by Miltiades. Political and intellectual day rose on the world, in these hours; and Asia, yielding up her supremacy to the Aryan races, was finally barred from crossing the Hellespont. The reign of Darius lasted till B.C. 486, and was a time of peace and prosperity to the Jews, though they were still exposed to the intrigues of their enemies at his court. After his death, the throne of Western Asia was held, for twenty-one years, by Xerxes, who renewed the struggle for the conquest of Greece, in which his father had so signally failed. But he only ex-

[1] Justi, p. 55.

hausted his empire, for his mightiest efforts to crush the West were shattered at Thermopylæ and Salamis. News of these great events must have been circulated eagerly among the settlers at Jerusalem and in Judah.

It was in the reign of this king, whose name, Ahasuerus, was known to the Greeks as Xerxes, that the incident in Jewish history happened, which forms the subject of the Book of Esther. The Great King was idling his life away in the fortress palace of Shushan, among the cool mountain breezes of his metropolitan province, while his generals and soldiers were fighting and dying for him in the East and West. The story opens in the third year of his reign, about seven years after the battle of Marathon,[1] while the war with Greece, so disastrous to Persia, was still raging. But the majestic empire of Cyrus and Darius still held together, from India to Ethiopia, embracing 127 provinces, and surrounding its chief with almost unimaginable splendour and wealth.

The city of Susa, or Shushan, lay about 150 miles north of the head of the Persian Gulf, in the uplands of Susiana, a mountainous region, east of the Tigris. The river Choaspes flowed brightly through the valleys on the east of the city, while the Eulæus, the Ulai of Daniel,[2] with the Shapur, and other streams, spread a network of shining waters round it, making the region a proverb for its luxuriance and fertility.[3] The capital was famous for its palace fortress, one of the residences of the Great King; each monarch, apparently, adding a house for himself to the vast piles already built by his predecessors. At Persepolis, in the mountains, about 300 miles to the south-east, the

[1] Marathon, B.C. 490. The reign of Xerxes was extended from B.C. 486–B.C. 465 (Vaux), or B.C. 485–465 (Justi).

[2] Dan. viii. 2, 16.

[3] *Geog. Journ.*, vol. ix. p. 71.

remains of a palace built by Xerxes himself, help us to realize the splendour of that of Shushan. A great platform of hewn stone formed a terrace for the central building, which measured about 350 feet in width and 250 feet in depth. Some of the pillars which bore up its porticos are still standing, and vary in height from 60 to 76 feet; their whole surface covered with elaborate ornamentation. An immense hall, in which stood the throne, stretched across the front of this central building, while other chambers equally grand, flanked it on either side. At Shushan, the palace stood on three distinct platforms of earth, the mounds formed by which cover a space of three and a half miles, round, and rise to a height of from fifty to sixty feet. The sides of these immense elevations shone with a casing of enamelled bricks, displaying, in vivid colours, a long succession of military splendour, in life-sized figures of the different services that made up the armies of the empire—guards, archers, spearmen, engineers, light and heavy regiments, in the widely diversified uniforms of many nationalities; cavalry, as varied; brigades of chariots, with their charioteers and warriors; and, amidst all, the gorgeously arrayed generals, colonels, and captains, who led these multitudinous hosts; the whole constituting a wondrous exhibition of mural decoration. Above this, stretched through its whole length, a frieze of lions, drawn with wonderful skill, each about six feet high, and more than eleven feet from the mouth to the end of the outstretched tail, standing out, in their natural colours, from a background of pale turquoise, suggestive of the limpid Persian sky. Elsewhere, other styles of ornamentation prevailed—borrowed from flowers, or from the fancy of the artist; no part of the vast surfaces being left unadorned,

The great audience hall of Xerxes stood on one of the three artificial platforms, and was approached, on the south-west, by a grand staircase, wide enough, as it seems, to let an army ascend its stately steps. The audience hall, itself, was nearly three hundred and fifty feet broad, and about two hundred and fifty feet deep, its roof being supported by thirty-six columns, the size of which may be estimated by that of those in the smaller audience chamber at Persepolis, which are over eighteen feet in diameter. The enamelled bricks of many colours, covering the walls on every side, represent, in minute completeness, among other glories, a march of the "Immortals," who formed the haughty body-guard of the Great King. These famous soldiers, bearing yellow bows and reddish-brown quivers, and holding in their one hand a silver-knobbed pike, are set off in golden yellow or white tunics, spangled, in some cases, with green or blue daisies, or other distinctions; their feet decorated with yellow or sky-blue boots; their beards dressed in ringlets, according to Asiatic fashion; and their heads arrayed in turbans. Some wear golden ornaments on their breasts or necks, and others bracelets and ear-rings; these being the thousand knights, who were over the ten thousand guards, to whom was committed the special care of the life of the Great King. Strange to say, they are, in great part, blacks, which is in keeping with the fact that the dynasty of the Achæmenids recruited this favoured corps, to a large extent, from the dark populations of India, trusting to the fidelity of foreign mercenaries, rather than to their own countrymen, as the Caliphs of Bagdad, from the ninth century, had a body-guard of Turks; as David chose his Cent-Gardes from the warriors of Philistia, or as the French kings gathered

round them a body of Swiss. The walls of the audience chamber were eighteen feet thick, to keep out the heat, while the three great ante-chambers measured, each, 200 feet in width and 65 in depth. Thirty-six pillars, as I have said, supported the roof; which, in each of the ante-chambers rested on twelve. But this was only the lower story. Overhead, the building rose to a height of from 100 to 120 feet, so that it must have towered, in all, 170 or 180 feet above the ground. Spreading far on every side from this amazing structure were gardens, well called a "paradise." Huge four-footed colossi, with wings and human heads, flanked all the gates and doors; and flights of marble steps, the stones of which were of gigantic size, supplied approaches worthy of such a building.[1]



Persian Noble.

Fifty-two years had passed since the Return, when Xerxes, in the mere license of pride and boundless wealth, ordered a series of feasts to be given, on a scale of surpassing magnificence, in his grounds and halls. The table of the Great King was proverbial for its splendid appointments and its luxury. Vast numbers of oxen, game, and fowl, were consumed each day; for not only the king, his court and harem, but his whole life-guard, consisting of 2,000 cavalry, 2,000 mounted lancers, and 10,000 infantry, were fed in the palace.[2]

[1] Fergusson, in *Dict. of Bible.* Justi, p. 107. Dieulafoy, *L'Art antique de la Perse, passim.* Babelon's *Manual of Oriental Antiquities*, 146, ff.

[2] Herod., vii. 40, 41. Duncker, *Gesch. des Alterth.*, vol. ii. p. 609. Justi, p. 126. Ebers makes the Great King feed 15,000 men daily (*Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. iii. p. 59). The cost he estimates at £90,000 a day.

Summoned to the great festival now to be held, all the satraps and their subordinates, the chiefs of the Persian and Median armies, and the nobles and magnates of the empire,[1] assembled in successive companies during six months, for so long did the succession of banquets last, each marked by all possible magnificence, to display the wealth and flatter the majesty of the king. Nor was even this enough. The great world having thus been duly honoured, a feast of seven days was proclaimed for all the population of Susa, in the "court of the garden of the king's palace." White, parti-coloured, and purple-blue hangings, held, by cords of white and purple, to silver curtain-poles and marble pillars, turned the vast space laid out for the banquet, into a grand open-air hall. Couches of gold and silver for the guests stretched in long rows, and the ground was paved for the occasion with alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and black and white marble,[2] like the floor of the audience hall. The drinking vessels for the throng of guests were each different in pattern from the other, and all of gold; and the wine from the royal cellars was either that of Aleppo, which alone the Great King



THE PERSIAN KING.—Behistan.

[1] Esth. i. 3.

[2] This appears to be the proper translation of Esth. i. 6.

drank, or of some other famous growths.[1] Precious as it was, it flowed like water; every one could drink as he chose.

The Persian kings had always several wives of various grades,[2] including generally, one or more of their own sisters. At this time Vashti, "the best," reigned supreme as the royal favourite, though probably not a wife of the first rank. To her it fell to entertain the women of Susa at a separate feast, for the guests were too numerous to allow the ladies to sit, as usual, with their husbands.[3] The feasting had lasted six days, and was to close on the seventh. Wine and excitement had turned the brain of Xerxes. Forgetting his royal dignity and that of his queens, he called on the seven eunuchs who waited before him, to bring Vashti, and display her charms, unveiled, before the assembled multitude of half-drunken men. But remembering perhaps, how, in the time of Darius, the Macedonian ladies, introduced to a Persian banquet in the same way, had been grossly insulted,[4] she hesitated to come, alike from respect to the king and to herself. It was enough. Disobedience on the part of any one, to his lightest whim, was not to be brooked. It might be followed by others. Vashti, moreover, had an enemy present—the chief of the eunuchs—who fanned the mad anger of his master. His proposal that she should be degraded, and another queen chosen in her place, was at once accepted.

Among the descendants of the Jewish exiles carried off

[1] The Great King, wherever he might be, drank only the water of the Choaspes, from Susa, ate only bread from wheat of Egypt or Assos, and drank only the wine of Aleppo. This reminds one of that inexpressible imposture, the Turkish Sultan, having water from the Nile carried everywhere after him through Europe, for his baths.

[2] Herod., iii. 2, 68, 69. Darius had six.

[3] Herod., ix. 110; v. 18.

[4] Herod., v. 18.

by Nebuchadnezzar in his first deportation of the population from Judah, was an orphan maiden of Benjamin—Hadassah, "the myrtle," known afterwards as Esther, "the star," perhaps Venus. She must have been very young, for maidens in Persia are in their glory at twelve, and fade by the age of twenty.[1] Her cousin, Mordecai, who treated her as his own child, filled some office in the palace, and, seeing her beauty, resolved to advance the interests of his race by getting for her, if possible, the place formerly held by Vashti. Introduced to the eunuchs of the harem, Esther spent the usual time of preparation for seeing the king—a year—in the customary training and care of her personal charms.[2]

In B.C. 479,[3] the year in which the defeats of Platæa and Mycale frightened the Persians from Ionia, Esther's time came to appear before Xerxes, and the result was love at first sight. Adopted as his favourite, the royal crown was set on her head, and she was raised to the position among the royal wives formerly held by Vashti. She had not, as yet, made known her race or family, and was afraid to do so, but a fortunate incident soon made her position secure. A conspiracy of two palace officials to murder Xerxes came to the knowledge of Mordecai, whose duties gave him a place in a chamber of the palace known as the king's gate. Telling the momentous secret to Esther, she warned the king, and thus saved his life, the criminals being hanged.

There was still danger, however, to both Esther and her cousin, from another quarter. Among the dignitaries at the court of Susa was one Haman, according to Jewish tradition an Agagite—that is, of the royal race of the

[1] Justi, p. 125. [2] Esth. ii. 1-14. [3] Justi says B.C. 478

Amalekites[1]—the bitterest enemies of the Jews.[2] He held the great post of Grand Vizier, or First Minister of the empire, but he had a secret trouble which fretted him, even in so grand a position. From some reason—probably Haman's nationality, or, perhaps, because to cast himself on the earth before him seemed like paying Divine honour to a mortal—Mordecai refused to pay this homage to the haughty magnate as he entered and left the palace. This affront was so bitterly resented, that nothing would satisfy the Vizier's fury but the destruction of all the race to which his enemy belonged. At one sweep he would avenge his own personal grudge, and quench the hereditary feud of his race, in the blood of the whole brood of the hated Jews. Insinuating to Xerxes that they were dangerous, as a people who, unlike the other subject races of the empire, insisted on observing their own laws rather than those of the king, and thus formed a ready centre for revolt, he obtained leave to arrange for their massacre, everywhere, throughout the empire, recommending his proposal by promising a vast sum[3] to the treasury from their wealth.[4] Fear and greed easily won the despot to the plot. The proposed victims and their property were made over to Haman; as if the slaughter and pillage of a people were a matter to be settled by a light word. To arm him with the requisite authority, he was forthwith entrusted with

[1] Esth. iii. 1. Num. xxiv. 7. 1 Sam. xv. Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vi. 5.

[2] In the Greek version he is called in one place a Macedonian (Esth. i. 19; ix. 24), the Syrian Greeks being the deadly enemies of the Jews when that version was made. The name Agagite may thus only mean hater of the Jews. Elsewhere in the same version he is called Bugæus (ix. 10), and Gogæus (iii. 1), names which are not readily explained. The names "Haman" and "Hammedatha" seem to be Persian.

[3] Esth. iii. 9.

[4] Prideaux, *Connection*, p. 453, says it was equal to £2,000,000, a huge sum in those days. Bertheau thinks it was equal to nearly £4,000,000. *Das B. Ester*, p. 321.

the royal signet ring,[1] all commands sealed with which carried the weight of imperial orders. Lots, drawn daily by Haman to find a fortunate day for the massacre, fell on the 13th of the month Adar—nearly our March. He had, no doubt, tried each day of the year, which began with Nisan, but, as it happened, he had to go on from the day on which it began to the eleventh of the last month, before the lot, drawn according to the rules of such matters, shewed that he had reached the day supposed to be propitious. Nearly a whole year would thus pass, from the day on which the lots were drawn, before the fatal one came on which they fell. This interval saved the Jews, and ruined Haman. His toilsome enquiries at the gods, by magic rites, by invoking the dead, and by all the other forms of ghostly spells, had come to no more than this!

Royal posts had been established throughout the empire by Cyrus the Great—fresh riders hurrying along all the chief roads, and changing horses every fourteen miles.[2] A decree having been drawn up by Haman to his own satisfaction, the government clerks—of whom, as in our own Foreign Office, there were some able to write every language

[1] The absolute despotism of the Persian kings is well shewn in the following lines:—"The will of the ruler is the will of the godhead." "Well spoken! The true Persian rejoices to be allowed to kiss the hand of his ruler, even if it be stained with his child's blood." "Cambyses has put my brother to death, but I murmur at him for it no more than I did at the godhead, who took my parents from me." Ebers, *Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 122. Æschylus (*Pers.*, 644), calls the Great King "Persia's Susa-born God."

[2] Four parasangs. Bertheau. Persian caravanserais or guest-houses for travellers, which were like our post-stations, owed their origin to the great Cyrus, who sought to abridge the vast distances of his world-wide empire by well-kept roads. He had also established a regular system of posts. At every station, the postman carrying the mails found a second ready to start on a fresh horse, on which, after receiving the mail-bag, he sprang forward like the wind, to hand his charge to a third postman at the next station. These couriers were called Angaroi, and were believed to be the swiftest riders in the world. Ebers, *Æg. Königstochter*, vol. ii. p. 6. Robinson, *Lex.* s. v. ἀγγαρεύω.

spoken in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire—soon furnished copies enough for the chief functionaries of the provinces, and with these the posts flew along every line of travel. All the Jews were to be every where killed on the day named, and their property seized for the king.

But Mordecai was destined to counteract this deadly plot. Having heard of it, he forsook his office in the king's gate, and clothing himself in sackcloth—his head strewn with ashes—stood in the open space before the palace gate, wailing aloud, and spreading the news among his people. He could not enter the palace bounds while in mourning, but he came as near as he could, that Esther might see or hear him, or have word carried to her. Nor would he put on robes sent out to him by Esther, to enable him to enter; the reason being soon, however, conveyed to her by one of the eunuchs of her apartments. Lamentation and misery soon filled every Jewish household, far and near. In Susa, itself, the community was distracted. The only hope for the race lay in Esther. Could she venture into the presence of the Great King, and tell the whole story? To go into his inner hall, uninvited, was death, unless he stretched out his golden sceptre to the intruder. She had not as yet revealed her nationality, but it must now be disclosed. Would she risk all, to save her people? Her answer became a high-souled Jewish maiden. If those in Susa would fast for three days, praying for her, she would do the same for herself, and afterwards venture her life for her race.

Success attended such self-devotion. Xerxes received Esther graciously. He would give her anything she wished, to the half of his kingdom.[1] But all she asked was, tha'

[1] Mark vi. 23.

he and Haman should come and drink wine with her. Her heart failed her, however, when they came, and she had to invite them to a second banquet next day. That he should be thus honoured seemed to Haman to brim the cup of his prosperity. The wealth to be got from the massacre was immense; he had ten sons and he was Grand Vizier of the empire! Above all, he had been invited by Esther, the queen, to come, with Xerxes himself, to a banquet given to the two only. Yet all this was nothing while Mordecai refused to bow before him.

"Let a huge pole be set up—seventy feet high," cried Zeresh, his wife, and a group of his friends, "and ask Xerxes to-morrow for leave to impale the Jew on it." Not falling down before the representative of the Great King, was treason to the sovereign himself!

But his pride was near its fall. Through the night, Xerxes could not sleep. Thoughts of his escape from assassination by the two chamberlains troubled him. The annals of the empire must be brought, to recall the details. What had been done for Mordecai, who had saved his life? Nothing. Almost at the moment when this was discovered, Haman entered the outer hall and asked an audience, hoping to get permission to impale his enemy. Allowed to enter, he was met, as he approached, by the question of Xerxes: "What should be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" Naturally thinking the question referred to himself, the answer was easy. "Let a robe of state, which the king has himself worn, be brought, and a horse on which the king has ridden, with its royal trappings, especially the head ornament of a royal crown which the king's charger bears,[1] and let one of the

[1] Esth. vi. 8.

noblest princes put the robe on the fortunate man, and having set him on the horse, lead him through Susa, crying aloud, 'Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour!'"

What this meant in a court like that of Persia is hard for us to realize. The golden ornaments, the robe of state, and the rest of the attire of Artaxerxes, the successor of Xerxes, were worth 10,000 talents, a sum only to be understood as millions of pounds sterling.[1] The royal dress of Xerxes himself was reckoned by the Greeks as worth 12,000 talents, and this seems not to have been an excessive valuation, when we read the details of the dress of a Shah of Persia even in the present century. "He was one blaze of jewels," says Sir Robert Ker Porter,[2] "which literally dazzled the eyes. A high three-fold tiara was on his head, entirely covered with diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds, so arranged that they reflected a splendid play of colours. Several black feathers, apparently of the heron, were stuck amidst the rows of diamonds, their tips ornamented with pear-shaped pearls of extraordinary size. His robe was of cloth of gold, covered, for the most part, in the same way, with precious stones and pearls, and a string of pearls, perhaps the largest in the world, hung round his neck. But his armlets and girdle surpassed all, for they blazed in the sun, like fire. The right armlet was called 'the Mountain of Light,' the left, 'the Sea of Light,' so magnificent were the diamonds in it."

In splendour like this, Mordecai, set on the king's charger by Haman, rode through the streets of Susa; the humbled Agagite proclaiming before his enemy the

[1] From four to five millions. Plut., *Artaxerxes*, 24.
[2] *Travels* (in the years 1817-1820), quoted by Justi, p. 124.

royal pleasure that such honour should be paid him. The vizier felt that he was ruined. At the banquet of wine, next day, matters came to a crisis. Esther openly accused Haman, before the king, of a plot to destroy her and all her race. Had she and they been sold as slaves, she said, she would not have spoken, for such an injury was not great enough to disturb the king by mentioning.[1] But the whole race, including herself, was to be exterminated. Furious at the disclosure, Xerxes rose and passed into the palace garden. Meanwhile, Haman, in his despair, threw himself at the foot of the couch, begging his life. But this only hastened his destruction. Caught in this attitude by the infuriated despot, the worst motives were not too bad to attribute to him. An order for his execution was instantly given, and forthwith, as a sign of his condemnation, the guards in attendance covered the victim's head. A few minutes more, and he was impaled on the sharpened top of the great flagstaff he had prepared for Mordecai, who was now made grand vizier in his place.[2]

It was imperative instantly to counteract the decree sent out by the hapless man. Since it could not be revoked, orders were despatched to every part, that the Jews should stand on the defensive, at the time of their projected massacre. A civil war thus broke out on the fatal day, but the Jews were victorious; 75,000 of their assailants falling throughout the empire, besides 500 in Susa alone. Among these were the ten sons of Haman.[3] No attempt at plunder was, however, anywhere made by the victors.

[1] Esth. vii. 4.

[2] A recent traveller saw at Teheran, some men fixed to a great wooden door by coarse, thick wooden pins driven through their bodies. They had been condemned, as criminals, though possibly only victims of despotic violence.

[3] Esth. ix. 12.

But even this revenge hardly satisfied Esther. Another day's slaughter in Susa, in which 300 men fell, was granted, before she felt at ease; and the bodies of Haman's sons were, at her request, impaled on lower stakes round that from which their father was still suspended. It would have been well for her memory had she been more merciful.

That the 13th Adar, on which the deliverance was achieved, and the 14th, on which Haman's party in Susa was finally crushed, should be kept as a double festivity, was natural, and they have been thus observed from that time to this. Even in the text of the Bible, moreover, the hatred of Haman by the Jew is curiously shewn, in the fact that the names of his ten sons are written in perpendicular columns, as if to shew that they were impaled one over the other beneath their father.[1]

Nine years later, in the year B.C. 465, Xerxes was murdered by the commandant of his bodyguard and one of his chamberlains, both foreigners, and specially trusted as such;[2] his son Artaxerxes,[3] "the long-armed," succeeding him in the empire—a mild, weak man, controlled by his mother and his sister Amytis, both women of a frivolous nature. The murderers of his father accused his brother Darius, to screen themselves, and the innocent blood of the prince stained the new king's accession, but the assassins did not permanently escape detection and punishment.

Over seventy years had elapsed from the date of the Return to the death of Xerxes. Zerubbabel had died—possibly in Babylon, where, according to Jewish tradition, he was honoured as "Prince of the Captivity."[4] His de-

[1] For the mode in which the feast of Purim (the Lots) is now kept, see Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. i. p. 225. [2] Justi, p. 124. [3] B.C. 465–425 Seder Olam, Ewald, vol. v. p. 188. Derembourg, vol. xx. p. 21.

scent from David seems to have been made a pretext by the enemies of the Jews at the Persian court for continuous agitation against the enlarging of Jerusalem, on the ground that a revolt might follow, to make Zerubbabel actual king. It may be that this led to his return to Susa; but whether he died in Judæa or in Persia, he left behind a daughter and two sons, whose descendants may be traced as honourable members of the community for five generations.[1] The glory of the house of David sank, however, finally in his person; its members, henceforth, living on in obscurity. Joshua, the high priest, who seems to have been in some measure the rival of his civilian colleague, apparently succeeded him as the titular head of the Jewish colony; but, resembling Zerubbabel in having little force of character, like him he failed to impress his influence on the age. The nominal rule in Jerusalem appears to have been left in his hands, with the sheiks of clans and the elders as his councillors; but the real authority remained with the Persian governor[2] of the district, who, either personally or by his deputy, took up his residence from time to time in the tower or castle Baris, which stood at the north-west edge of the Temple precincts, and thus overawed both Temple and town.

The harsh rejection of the Samaritan overtures to aid in rebuilding the Temple, had borne bitter fruit. The struggle had ended in the triumph of the Jewish colony, so far as the sanctuary itself was concerned; but the decrees of Cyrus and Darius had not included permission to restore or fortify Jerusalem. A constant opportunity for intrigue at the Persian courts was thus always ready to the Samaritans, Idumæans, and others, whose animosity to the Jews

[1] Ewald, vol. v. p. 122. Graetz, vol. ii. pp. 2, 115. [2] Neh. vii. 5; v. 15.

grew continually more embittered. An illustration of this yet survives,[1] in a letter to the court of Susa, written during the reign of Artaxerxes, by the Persian officials of Samaria, in their own name and in that of their subjects. Similar communications had been forwarded during this and the preceding reign, but the result in their case is not stated.[2] In the one quoted, two Persian dignitaries—Rehum, the king's councillor, and his secretary, write in behalf of the descendants of the heathen settlers brought to the country by Asnapper—perhaps the general of Esarhaddon, or possibly another name for that monarch, himself.[3] They complain that the Jews were rebuilding the city and walls of Jerusalem, with a view to refusing tribute, and revolting from the Great King. Such a document was well fitted to disturb a court so familiar with rebellions, especially in the past history of the Jews, and caused the immediate prohibition of all further work, at least on the fortifications.[4]

Still the new community made some progress. Houses, better and worse, were raised; the high priest lived in a mansion suitable to his dignity, within the Temple precincts;[5] trade increased; a larger population circulated through the half-restored streets. Ebers, in one of his charming books, introduces a Jew as buying horses in Egypt for Zerubbabel;[6] Phœnician fishermen had stalls in

[1] Ezra iv. 7, 23. This fragment is clearly inserted out of its place. All critics agree in this.

[2] Ezra iv. 6. The chronicler states that the copy of the letter seen by him was written with Aramaic letters, and translated into Aramaic; the Jewish community using the Hebrew. Ezra iv. 6, mentions a letter written in the reign of Xerxes; ver. 7, one written in that of Artaxerxes; and ver. 8, a third. The long list of places mentioned in Ezra iv. 9, as part of those from which people had been transplanted to Samaria, shews how very mixed the population of the Northern Kingdom must, to a large extent, have become, in the end.

[3] See vol. iv. pp. 286, ff.

[4] Between B.C. 465 and B.C. 459.

[5] Neh. iii. 20.

[6] *Ægypt. Königstochter*, vol. i. p. 15.

Jerusalem for their catch, and traders from Tyre, booths for their wares.[1] The guilds of the goldsmiths and of the apothecaries were re-established;[2] carpenters and locksmiths had their workshops;[3] masons, of course, were a numerous craft, and other traders of various kinds found occupation.[4] The country round, moreover, was well cultivated, and supplied the market with ass-loads of wine, grapes, figs, grain, and other growth of the field or garden.[5]

The spirits of the colony were, however, far from hopeful. They had expected a vast influx of their brethren, from Babylon and other lands, but had been to a great extent disappointed. There was no sign, as yet, of the wealth of the Gentiles being poured into their treasuries, as had been promised by Haggai and the other prophets.[6] On the contrary, the walls of their city lay in ruins, and the rubbish of the houses destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar more than a hundred years before, still rose in long-stretching mounds. Their subjection to Persia forced itself on the citizens at every turn. The tribute imposed on them was a heavy burden to a poor community. In addition to this, the establishments of the Persian governors were maintained by requisitions of bread, wine, and money, from town and country, and even subordinates and their servants lorded it over the people at large.[7] Jewish recruits had doubtless been forced into the Persian armies, for all the nations of the empire had to contribute their proportion to the vast hosts of the Great King. Cambyses and Xerxes had both invaded Egypt,[8] passing through Palestine, and the invasion must have seriously affected Judah.

[1] Neh. xiii. 15.
[2] Neh. iii. 8, 31, 32.
[3] Neh. iii. 6.
[4] Neh. iii. 32.
[5] Neh. xiii. 15.
[6] Hag. ii. 7.
[7] Neh. v. 15.
[8] B.C. 525, B.C. 484.

The Jewish colony had hoped for great things from Zerubbabel, as a descendant of David, but he had done little to help them, and with his death, the long-honoured royal line had sunk out of sight. Phœnicia had risen, while they continued prostrate, and boasted its kings,[1] as, indeed, did even the cities of Philistia.[2] Damascus was the seat of a Persian official, superior to the local governor set over Judah. All the ancient enemies of the nation seemed to prosper, while Jerusalem was still partly in ruins.

Under these circumstances, the prophet Zechariah, now an old man, once more came forward to cheer his contemporaries. His style of address had changed with the altered state of affairs. Lands which belonged to Israel by Divine covenant,[3] and over which David and Solomon had ruled, were held by the alien.[4] The seer cared little for the regions not promised in the Law, and leaves them unnoticed.[5] Judah would see the judgments of God on the nations who held her ancient boundaries, and they would be taught, in the end, to seek Jehovah, whom they had so long offended.

"IX. 1. The utterance of Jehovah,[6]—he says—has gone forth against Hadrach (near Damascus), and will rest on Damascus; for Jehovah has His eyes on all men, and also on the children of Israel, 2. and on Hamath also, (at the Orontes), and on Tyre and Sidon—wise

[1] Herod., viii. 67.

[2] Zech. ix. 5.

[3] Gen. xv. 18. Exod. xxiii. 31. Num. xxxiv. 1–12.

[4] Syria, Phœnicia, and Philistia.

[5] Edom, Moab, Ammon. Deut. ii. 4, 5, 9, 19.

[6] **Zech. ix. 1, 2.** Reuss, like a number of recent critics, assigns Zech. ix.–xi. to the time when both Israel and Judah were still nations, "with their kings and idols, and vain trust in future victorious wars of revenge." He explains allusions to the return of exiles by the fact that Joel and Amos had already promised the same thing, and lays weight on Greece, Egypt, and Assyria having to give up their captives, while there is no mention of Babylon, or any trace of post-exilic affairs. *Gesch. de. Alt. Test.*, § 234.

though she think herself. 3. Tyre, indeed,[1] built herself a fortress and heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets. 4. But Jehovah will impoverish her, and smite her sea-power, and burn her with fire. 5. Ashkelon will see this and fear; Gaza also, and will writhe in terror; Ekron will behold it and her hopes be put to shame. And its king will perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon will be uninhabited. 6. A mongrel people will dwell at Ashdod, and Jehovah will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7. (They eat the blood with the flesh)—but HE will take it out of their mouth, and their (unclean) abominations from between their teeth. Yet the remnant that escapes (these judgments) will join themselves to Him, and the head of this remnant will be like the chief of a 'thousand'[2] in Judah, and Ekron (will be to Israel) as the old Jebusites (were to the people of Jerusalem —incorporated with them and subject to them).[3] 8. And I (says Jehovah) will pitch a camp round My House, (against hostile attacks), that none pass through or return (to injure it); no oppressor will assail it[4] any more, for I have now looked into it with Mine eyes."

Not only will Jehovah protect His House; He will cause the Messianic king to appear in Jerusalem, and thence spread the reign of Peace over the world.

"9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king will come to thee: he is righteous and brings victory; lowly, and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of a she-ass[5] (the beast ridden by Jewish kings). 10. And I will destroy (all signs of war)—the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the war-bow shall be destroyed; and he will speak peace to the nations, and his dominion will be from sea to sea[6]—and from the river (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth."

Israel will be delivered out of bondage in all lands, and will be victorious over the heathen.

[1] Zech. ix. 3-10.

[2] A clan, or subdivision of a tribe.

[3] 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. 1 Chron. xxi. 15.

[4] Literally, "them."

[5] Bovet's *Egypt*, etc., p. 273. The Rabbis, commenting on this text, say that the ass will be one of a hundred colours. Barclay's *Talmud*, p. 36.

[6] An indefinite expression. The seas known to the Hebrews were the Caspian, the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean.

"11. As to thee also, (O Israel);[1] because of the blood of thy covenant (made by Me with thee), I will bring thy captives from their dungeon in the dry underground cistern. 12. Turn back to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope! Even to-day I declare that I will repay thee double (joy, for all your sorrow), 13. for I will bend Judah for Me (as a bow), I will make Ephraim (My arrow with which) to fill it, and I will raise up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece,[2] and make thee as the sword of a mighty warrior. 14. And Jehovah will appear over them, and His arrow will shoot forth like the lightning, and the Lord Jehovah will blow the trumpet, and will march amidst the storms of the south,[3] (from the desert, from Sinai, His ancient seat). 15. Jehovah of Hosts will protect His people, and they will devour (their enemies before them), and hurl them away like sling stones, and they will drink (the blood of the slain) till they shout as if drunk with wine, and they shall be filled (with blood) as the bowls (of the altar are), or as its corners (on which the blood is sprinkled). 16. And Jehovah, their God, will save His people on that day, as a shepherd saves his flock, for they are to Him like jewels of a crown, glittering over His land! 17. For how great is their goodliness, how great is their beauty (through the blessing of Jehovah)! (Rich harvests of) corn will make the young men cheerful,[4] and new wine the maidens."

God is the one source of prosperity; the idols are vanity: He will save His people in all their tribes.

"X. 1. Pray to Jehovah for rain in the spring-time! Pray to Jehovah who creates the lightnings, and He will give rich showers, and grass in every one's field. 2. For the teraphim[5]—(the house-gods)—have spoken vanity, and the diviners have lying visions and tell false dreams, and give no comfort. Hence the people went astray like a flock, and were in trouble, because there was no shepherd. 3. My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the bell-goats,[6] for Jehovah of Hosts cares for His flock, the House of Judah, and makes it like His goodly horse in the battle. 4. Out of Judah

[1] **Zech. ix. 11-17; x. 1-4.** [2] Hebrew "Javan" = Ionia.

[3] The most terrible tempests (Isa. xxi. 1; Hos. xiii. 15), often accompanied with dreadful sand whirlwinds, like those that overwhelmed part of the army of Cambyses. [4] "Flourish," Keil.

[5] See illustration, p. 424. As already noticed, "teraphim" and "diviners" seem to speak of the time before the Exile.

[6] Vol. iv. p. 422; vol. v. p. 368.

shall come forth the corner-stone, out of him the tent-peg, out of him the battle-bow, out of Him every governor.[1] 5. And the men of Judah shall be as heroes, treading down the enemy in the battle, like the mire of the streets, and they will fight, because Jehovah is with them, and the riders on horses will be put to shame.[2] 6. And I will make the house of Judah strong, and I will save the house of Joseph, and make them dwell once more (in their own land), for I have had pity on them, and they shall be as if I had not cast them off, for I am Jehovah their God and will hear them. 7. And Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and his heart will rejoice as with wine, and his children will see it and be glad; their heart will rejoice in Jehovah. 8. I will hiss for them (as a bee-master hisses to draw to him a swarm), and will gather them, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as numerous again as of old. 9. I have sown them among the peoples, but they will remember Me in far countries, and return with their children with whom they have lived. 10. And I will bring them back out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria,[3] and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, till room be wanting for them. 11. And Jehovah shall pass through the Sea of Affliction (as through the Red Sea, of old), and shall smite down the waves of the sea, and dry up the deeps of the Nile, and the pride of Assyria[4] will be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt will depart from it. And I will make them strong in Jehovah, and they will walk in His name, says Jehovah."

Unfortunately, the future history of Israel did not realize the conditions required for the fulfilment of these promises. The national life continued corrupt and ungodly. Lawless and tyrannical rulers still destroyed the common people—the flock of Jehovah—and the end of this was terrible ruin. Zechariah introduces this result

[1] Eichhorn translates these lines : "Out of Him shall come those who are at the head,—the under leaders,—those who shoot with the bow in battle," etc. **Zech. x. 5-11.**

[2] Moses did not allow cavalry in the Jewish army. It would have been of little use in a highland district like that held by the Twelve Tribes.

[3] Many Jews were doubtless still in Assyria.

[4] Assyria is often used in connection with the Persian kings of Babylon. In Ezra vi. 22, the king of Persia is called the king of Assyria. Yet Nineveh, and, with it, the Assyrian empire, had fallen more than twenty years before Judah was led off to Babylon. This shews how very hard it is to assign a date to utterances so figurative, and so capable of different explanations.

abruptly, in the opening of the eleventh chapter, painting a catastrophe that was repeated more than once, by the Greeks, Syrians, and Romans, in following centuries.

"XI. 1. Open thy gates, O Lebanon,[1] that fire may devour thy cedars.[2] 2. Howl, O cypress, for the cedar is fallen! the glorious trees are destroyed! Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, (for your fate is sealed), since even the inaccessible (mountain) forests (of Lebanon) are laid low! 3. The loud cries of the shepherds ascend, for the grazing places which are their glory are laid waste. Hark! one hears the roaring of young lions, for the thickets of Jordan, their haunts, are destroyed."[3]

The loving care of Jehovah for His people, oppressed by their rulers, is shewn in His committing them to the care of the prophet, as a type of the Anointed One to come. He seeks to guide them with a shepherd's rod called Favour, and lead them in the paths of right. But their moral perversity makes him at last hopeless, so that he substitutes a staff which he calls Union, the meaning of which he afterwards explains. Love would be tried first; punishment would follow, when love failed to win them.

"4. Thus spake Jehovah, my God: Feed the flock doomed to death, 5. whose buyers slaughter them and feel no sense of guilt, and whose sellers say, 'Blessed be Jehovah, I am growing rich,' and whose own shepherds do not pity them. 6. For I (Jehovah) will no more pity the inhabitants of the land (the oppressors of My flock, the people among whom it dwells), says Jehovah, but, lo, I will give them up, every one into the hand of his neighbour, and into the hand of his king, and they will smite the land, and I will not save them out of their hand."

[1] **Zech. xi. 1-6.**

[2] Bleek and some others refer this passage to the invasion by Tiglath Pileser, and think the prophecy dates from the age of Ahaz. But this idea is rejected by Ewald and Hitzig, nor is it tenable, since the invasion referred to, though, like all others, it came from the north, did not waste the southern Jordan as this did. See vol. iv. p. 274.

[3] Vol. ii. p. 438.

The prophet next describes his feeding of the flock, but he speaks, not for himself, but for the chief shepherd, or ruler, hereafter to appear.

"7. And I fed the flock doomed to death,[1] the poor of the flock, and took two shepherd's staves; one I called Favour, the other I called Union. And I fed the flock. 8. And I destroyed three of the shepherds in one month,[2] for My soul was impatient of them and theirs abhorred Me. 9. Then I said, 'I will feed you no longer; what dies may die, what is killed may be so; as to the survivors, let each eat the flesh of the other.' 10. And I took my staff 'Favour,' and broke it across, to break My covenant which I had made with all peoples, (not to injure Israel). 11. And it was broken across on the same day, and thus the poor of the flock, who marked what I did, knew that it was the word of Jehovah.

"12. And I said to them (the flock—not the poor of it only): 'If ye think well, give me my wages, and if not, withhold them.' And they weighed out to me as my wages, thirty pieces of silver.[3] 13. Then said Jehovah to me: 'Cast it to the potter;[4] it is a goodly price (indeed) at which I have been valued by them!' So I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter,[5] in the House of Jehovah.

"14. Then I broke in two my other staff, 'Union,' to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."

Having driven the good shepherd, by its wickedness, to

[1] **Zech. xi. 7-14.**

[2] The three shepherds cut off in one month have been variously supposed to be the kings Zechariah, Shallum, and Menahem, of the Ten Tribes; the three kings Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus Eupator, and Demetrius I.; and the three empires, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and Macedonian. It seems most reasonable to accept the first theory, from the historical facts of the case; for the others either require the "month" to be taken as a prophetic month of thirty days, each of seven years' duration, or as a general term for an indefinite period. Dr. Pusey thinks the three kings mean the "priests, judges, and lawyers," who, having crucified Christ, were destroyed in one month, Nisan, A.D. 33. But how he makes this out is inexplicable to me.

[3] Thirty shekels were the price of a slave accidentally killed (Exod. xxi. 32); and also that for which a slave could be bought (Hos. iii. 2). For reference to this passage, see Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.

[4] The Targum, Kimchi, and Gesenius read, "the treasurer." The Peshito, De Wette, Ewald, and Hitzig, read "into the treasury." The change is made by substituting an Aleph for a Yod in the Hebrew word.

[5] To "cast anything to the potter," seems to have been a proverbial expression for treating with contempt.

give up his office as shepherd, Israel is committed to a shepherd who leads it to ruin.

"15. And Jehovah said to me, Take to thee the outfit of a worthless[1] shepherd, 16. for, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who will care nothing for those that are perishing, and will not seek the scattered ones, or heal that which is wounded, or feed that which is sound, but will eat the flesh of the fat, tearing even their feet to pieces. 17. Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! The sword shall come on his arm, and pierce his right eye; his arm shall be withered, and his eye put out!"

The last part of the prophecies of Zechariah is as dark and enigmatical as the rest of the Book, and is, indeed, hard to understand. Heavy judgments on Israel are at last to purify it and lead it to God. His people are then to triumph, and His Spirit to be poured out upon them, so that they will bitterly repent their former wickedness, and in the end will purify themselves from all ungodliness.

"XII. 1. The burden of the word of Jehovah[2] respecting Israel. Jehovah, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him, saith: 2. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of confusion to all the peoples round, and that cup will be also for Judah, when Jerusalem is besieged. 3. On that day I will make Jerusalem for all peoples a stone heavy to move; all who try to raise it will be sore hurt, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against her. 4. In that day, says Jehovah, I will smite every horse with terror, and his rider with frenzy, and I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and smite every horse of the nations with blindness. 5. And the chiefs of Judah will say in

[1] Foolish = thoroughly unworthy. To whom this refers is very differently understood by different scholars Some think it refers to the last kings of Israel, but especially to some unknown oppressor who followed them. Others have various conjectures. **Zech. xi. 15 17; xii. 1-5.**

[2] Zech. xii. This chapter, and the rest of the Book, are assigned by Reuss and others to the closing times of the kingdom of Judah. The author is held to have been a contemporary of Jeremiah, and to have uttered these chapters about B. C. 607 606. If the verses in the text were spoken before the Chaldæan assault on Jerusalem, it is clear, however, that they were far from being fulfilled then.

their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are a strength to me, through Jehovah of Hosts, their God.' 6. In that day I will make the chiefs of Judah a panful of fire among fagots,[1] and like a torch among sheaves, and they will consume the peoples round about, on the right hand and the left, and Jerusalem shall still dwell on her old bounds. 7. Jehovah, also, will save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not magnify itself against Judah.

"8. In that day Jehovah will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble[2] among them, at that day, shall be (strong) as David, and the house of David shall be as God; as the angel of Jehovah before them. 9. And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

But Jehovah will do still more for His people. He will pour out His Spirit on them, and lead them to sincere repentance.

"10. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication, and they will look on him[3] whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one who mourns for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that weeps bitterly for his first-born. 11. In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo (where all Israel lamented the death of King Josiah),[4] 12. and the whole land will mourn, every clan apart; the clan of the house of David apart, and their wives by themselves; 13. the clan of the house of Levi apart, and their wives by themselves; the clan of Shimei[5] apart, and their wives by themselves; and all the clans besides, every clan apart, and their wives by themselves."

This earnest repentance of Israel will lead to a hearty and full regeneration of the people, since God will open to them the fountain of His grace, to cleanse them from sin and to strengthen them to a holy life.

"XIII. 1. In that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for unclean-

[1] **Zech. xii. 6–13; xiii. 1.**
[2] Literally, "tottering."
[3] Hebrew, "me;" many MSS. have "him."
[4] Vol. v. p. 252.
[5] The clan of the son of Gerson, the grandson of Levi. Num. iii. 17, 18.

ness. 2. On that day,' says Jehovah of Hosts, I will root out the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no more be remembered, and I will also remove the (false) prophets and the spirit of uncleanness from the land. 3. And if any one still (pretends to) prophesy, his father and his mother, who begat him, will say to him, 'Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest a lie in the name of Jehovah,' and they will thrust him through for his (pretended) prophesying. 4. And in that day the (false) prophets will be brought to shame, every one for his (so-called) prophetic visions, and they will no longer wear a garment of hair to deceive. 5. But such a false prophet will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground, for a man bought me as a slave, in my youth, to tend cattle.' 6. And if one ask him, 'What are these wounds in your hands?' (He will not own that they are the cuttings he made in his flesh, in Baal worship and the like), but will pretend that they are the marks of stripes received, when a child, from his parents, who loved him."

The prophet now passes to a new subject—the judgment by which Israel will at last be purified from the moral dross still cleaving to it, and be made a holy people to Jehovah.

"7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is My fellow,[2] says Jehovah of Hosts. Smite the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; then will I turn My hand towards the poor (and pious).[3] 8. And in the whole land, says Jehovah, two parts will be destroyed and die, but a third part will survive. 9. And I will bring the third part into the fire and smelt them as silver is smelted, and purify them as gold is purified. They will call on My name and I will hear them: I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'Jehovah is my God.'

"XIV. 1. Behold! a day of Jehovah comes, and thy spoil will be divided in the midst of thee (O Zion). 2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem, to battle, and the city will be taken, the houses sacked, the women outraged, and half the town will go forth into captivity, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3. For Jehovah will go forth and fight against these nations, as He fights on the day of battle. 4. And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which lies east of Jerusalem, and that mount

[1] **Zech. xiii. 2-9; xiv. 1-4.**
[2] Or neighbour." The word is thus translated in nearly every case in the A. V.
[3] Hitzig.

will split in the midst, east and west, into a very great valley, and half of it will move to the north and half of it to the south. 5. And ye shall flee to the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel, (close to Jerusalem);[1] yea, ye will flee as ye fled before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jehovah, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him.[2] 6. And on that day there will be no light; the stars[3] will shrink back.[4] 7. But it will be a day known of Jehovah, neither day nor night, but at the evening time it shall be light. 8. And in that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the East (or Dead) Sea, half of them to the Western Sea (the Mediterranean); they will flow both in summer and winter. 9. And Jehovah will be king over all the land. In that day Jehovah will be One and His name One. 10. All the land will be changed and made like the Arabah, (the plain south of the Dead Sea), from Geba, (nine miles north of Jerusalem), to Rimmon, far to the south of it,[5] and Jerusalem will stand high, and dwell on its bounds, from the Gate of Benjamin, (on the north wall), to the place of the first gate—the Gate of the Corner, (on the north-west)—and from the Tower of Hananeel, (on the north-east corner of the walls),[6] to the king's wine-presses, (on the south of the city).[7] 11. And men will dwell in it, and there will be no more a ban on it, (it will no more be devoted by God to destruction), and Jerusalem will dwell securely."

While Israel will be thus blest by God, its enemies will be grievously punished.

"12. And this will be the plague with which Jehovah will smite all the peoples that have fought against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall waste away while they stand on their feet, and their eyes waste away in their sockets, and their tongues in their mouth. 13. And in that day there will be a great confusion, from Jehovah, among them, so that every one will seize the hand of his neighbour, and lift up his hand against his neighbour's hand. 14. And Judah also will fight at

[1] Mic. i. 11; called there Beth-ezel. **Zech. xiv. 5–14.** [2] So, many MSS.
[3] Hebrew, "The precious things."
[4] The Septuagint reads, "there shall not be light, but cold and ice."
[5] Perhaps the ruins "Um er Rummanim," twelve miles north of Beersheba. Josh xv. 32; xix. 7.
[6] Neh. iii. 1. [7] Neh. iii. 15.

Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the nations, round about, will be gathered together, gold and silver, and garments, in great abundance. 15. And the plague[1] (sent from Jehovah) on the horse, the mule, the camel, the ass, and all the cattle, in those camps, will be the same as that on the men."

The heathen who escape these judgments will ultimately turn to God.

"16. And it will come to pass, that every one left of all the nations who came up against Jerusalem, will go up (to it) from year to year, to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17. And on those, of all the families of the earth, who will not come up to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, there will be no rain. 18. And if the people of Egypt do not go up (to Jerusalem, to the feasts), on them shall be the plague,[2] with which Jehovah will smite the nations that do not come up to the Feast of Tabernacles."

In that last time all Jerusalem will be holy to Jehovah.

"20. In that day there will be (even) on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to Jehovah,' and the very pots (for cooking), in the House of Jehovah, will be pure as the sacrificial bowls before the altar. 21. Indeed, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Jehovah of Hosts, and all who intend to offer sacrifices will come and take them, and seethe (their offerings in them—so ceremonially clean will they be). And in that day no Canaanite (that is, no unworthy worshipper) will enter any more into the House of Jehovah of Hosts."

These utterances may be taken as an illustration of those addressed to the community at Jerusalem, in the gloomy years preceding the arrival of Ezra from Persia, in B.C. 459 or 458, nearly eighty years after the Return. Couched in a highly figurative style, their meaning is even now very obscure; but their strong and vivid imagery of defeats and plague to be endured by the enemies of Israel, and of the final glory of Jerusalem, saved at last from all its foes, was

[1] Zech. xiv. 15-21.

[2] Septuagint.

well-fitted to cheer the population amidst its long depression. Neither prophet nor people could believe that any but a triumphant future lay before the nation, bringing with it a triumphal war of revenge against all its enemies, and elevation over them as their all-powerful conqueror.

CHAPTER XX.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

THE enthusiasm which had urged so many of the exiles in Babylon to seek the land of their fathers once more, had reacted on the far larger portion of the nation, which stayed behind. The Pilgrim Fathers had set out, amidst the profound sympathy of their less adventurous brethren, carrying with them rich proofs of its sincerity. Idolatry was finally and absolutely abandoned in every Jewish home on the Euphrates, as one result of the religious fervour of the time. Family ties linked together the new colony in Judah and those who remained behind, and led to a lively intercourse between the two communities. On the one hand, men from Jerusalem revisited their brethren of the Golah or Dispersion, telling the sad trials in Jerusalem and Judah, and seeking help from rich friends in Babylonia.[1] On the other, not a few journeyed from the Euphrates to the Holy City, to pay vows and offer gifts on the spot once more consecrated by the presence of Jehovah. When Jews in Palestine and other lands, as was not infrequent in such troubled times, were seized as captives or sold as slaves, their brethren of the Golah spared no efforts or sacrifices to redeem or deliver them.[2] Prosperous, and able to help their motherland, these foreign Hebrews were proud to do so. Since Susa had become the residence of the Persian

[1] Neh. i. 2. [2] Neh. v. 8.

kings, and Babylon had thus lost its importance, many Jews had followed the court, and founded new colonies in the eastern provinces, where numbers grew rich, and some, like Daniel in earlier days, gained official positions under the Great King.

The reaction from their former heathen tendencies was very striking. Face to face with idolatry, they at last acted on the counsels of the prophets, and put away every approach to it in their own practice, devoting themselves to Jehovah as their only God. Their national isolation promoted this great reform, while the still stricter separation demanded by their religion, for its complete observance, increasingly developed this cherished distinctness. Cut off from the Temple and its rites, they grew increasingly anxious to preserve their boast of being "the people of God." Marriage was henceforth only permitted within their own race, and the faith of their fathers, at least in its ritual details, became the one rule of their life. They might be unable to carry out the precepts relating to worship in the Temple, but they could observe with the more sedulous care those which bore on everyday practice—the Sabbath, the religious festivals, circumcision, and the laws of Levitical purity. They had houses for prayer, in which they met at set times. Amidst a population speaking Aramaic, they still cherished among themselves their ancestral Hebrew[1]—as the language of their sacred writings. In these they found a worthy object for their freshly kindled religious zeal, cut off as they were from the Temple, its prayers, and sacrifices. The writings of the prophets were their special delight in the earlier years of the Exile, notwithstanding their searching reproofs; for, besides these, there were magnificent prom-

[1] Neh. xiii. 24.

ises to excite their hopes and gratify their pride. But, as time passed, the Books of the Law, in their five-fold division, took the chief place in their regard. As the very words heard by their great leader, Moses, from the lips of Jehovah, on the awful top of Sinai, "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness," when God "spoke to him with a great voice," "all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which he should teach Israel"—their commands demanded zealous obedience, at once to secure His favour, and to emphasize the supreme distinction among mankind which the possession of them implied. A new order of literary men ere long arose, to whom the study of the Law was the absorbing passion of life. There had always been "scribes," as the annalists, clerks, and letter writers of the community; but henceforth the name was virtually limited to those who devoted themselves wholly to the copying or studying of the Torah. Every precept was discussed by these enthusiasts in all its possible applications, that no loop-hole might be left for even constructive transgression. A beginning was thus made of the vast system of casuistry, which, in after times, expanded into the twelve folio volumes of the Talmud. To guard against the breach of even the most trivial legal requirement, a "hedge" of outlying prescriptions was set round the whole Law. In their puritanical zeal, the scribes were disposed to widen the sweep of every injunction. The spirit of the good king Josiah, the true founder of Judaism, had revived in the early Rabbis of the Babylonian Golah.

It was otherwise among the colonists of Judah and Jerusalem. Some, doubtless, were as zealous for the Law as their brethren on the Euphrates, but very many had yielded

to circumstances, and intermingled freely with the families of kindred races in their midst, not a few of whom had become proselytes to the Jewish faith, and lived in Judah and Jerusalem. Marriages of Israelites with women of alien blood, though, perhaps, as a rule, of a common faith, naturally resulted, and other laxities, such as a careless observance of the Sabbath, more or less prevailed.[1]

This state of things must have been known in Babylonia, though hardly realized to the full extent by those who were themselves so strict. A zealous reformer, however, soon appeared, destined to bring about a wonderful change.

At the head of the scribes among the Golah, stood Ezra, a man of priestly rank, famous for his knowledge of the Law, and zeal for its strict observance. His ancestry, which he could trace back to Aaron,[2] included a long succession of priestly dignitaries. He was a descendant of the high priest, Hilkiah, who had found the Book of the Law in the Temple, in the days of Josiah, and of the high priest Seraiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had put to death at Riblah.[3] Hence he stood out from his contemporaries as especially "the priest."[4] But having been born in Babylonia, he had never seen the Temple. His priestly dignity was thus only titular, for he was far from the spot where alone he could officiate. So much the more earnestly had he betaken himself to the study of the Law, and so much the more enthusiastic was he for its rigid observance. To secure this, all other considerations had to bow. Intensely earnest, he had the absolute confidence of a zealot in his own definitions of its requirements. To enforce the Levitical holiness of Israel had become his one idea, and no Puri-

[1] Neh. xiii. 15.
[2] Ezra vii. 1, ff.
[3] 2 Kings xxv. 18.
[4] Ezra vii. 11, 12; x. 10, 16. Neh. viii. 2.

tan was ever more energetic or stern in pressing his will on others as that of God. Already known as "the priest," he was even more widely known in his riper years as "the scribe."[1] On new year's day of B.C. 459–8, the seventh year of Artaxerxes "the long-armed," son of the murdered Xerxes, Ezra had made up his mind to visit the Jewish colony in Palestine, and with his usual decision at once sought and obtained permission from the king to do so. His object was to inquire respecting the observance of the Law, as expounded by himself, in Judah and Jerusalem.[2] His own profound acquaintance with it, and his absolute obedience to its minutest requirements were so universally acknowledged, that a school of disciples had gathered round him in Babylon, to spread his doctrine and recommend his example.[3] In his opinion it rose in dignity above all the other sacred writings. Other prophets had received revelations in visions, but Moses had seen God face to face. The Law had come direct from the lips of Jehovah.

Twelve days after his resolution to set out for Jerusalem, he was ready to start, armed with a letter from Artaxerxes, securing him the assistance and protection of the imperial officers, on his journey and in Palestine. King and nobles, indeed, vied with each other to shew him favour, so profound is the power of transparent sincerity. Besides contributing gold and silver as gifts to the Temple, Artaxerxes allowed him to accept help from his brethren and others who were friendly. He soon received twenty sacred vessels of gold, worth a thousand darics, or £1,000 sterling;[4] and two, as costly as gold, of glittering copper; smaller ones of gold, weighing a hundred talents—equal to £45,000,

[1] Neh. viii. 4, 9, 13; xii. 26, 36. Ezra vii. 6, 11, 12.
[2] Ezra vii. 14.
[3] Ezra vii. 10.
[4] Riehm, p. 258.

and others, of silver, of equal weight, that is, worth £20,000.[1] In silver money, alone, he further received 650 talents, or nearly £200,000,[2] an immense amount in those times. Orders on the royal treasuries secured wheat, wine, oil, and salt, for the caravan, at every station,[3] and he was further empowered to obtain from these stores whatever money might be required for sacrifices at Jerusalem.[4] Special exemption from taxes was, moreover, granted all priests, Levites, and other officials of the Temple.[5] Finally, he was empowered to appoint magistrates and judges in Judah who should secure obedience to the Law, and see that it was universally taught;[6] obedience to them being enforced under penalty of imprisonment, confiscation of goods, exclusion from the congregation, or death, as they, or he himself, decreed.[7] He was armed, in fact, with despotic power to enforce compliance with his religious opinions. Submission to his will was the only protection against the loss of property, or even of life.

The rendezvous for the caravan was appointed at Ahava, on a canal of that name, in Babylonia, and there no fewer than 1,500 men of the better classes pitched their tents on the appointed day—laymen, priests, and others. No one of doubtful blood could be enrolled in such an expedition, and hence three days were spent in testing the genealogies of the intending pilgrims. Strange to say, no Levites had presented themselves, nor any of the Temple slaves.[8] A weighty deputation of chief men, with two "teachers" of the Law—members of the new body of scribes—was therefore sent off[9] to a colony of Levites and Nethinim at

[1] Kneucker, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 460.
[2] Ezra viii. 25-27.
[3] Ezra vii. 22.
[4] Ezra vii. 16.
[5] Ezra vii. 24.
[6] Ezra vii. 25.
[7] Ezra vii. 26.
[8] Ezra viii. 15-17.
[9] In A. V., "Men of understanding," Ezra viii. 16.

Casiphia, a place now unknown, for volunteers. The accession of a "teacher" or scribe, and about forty Levites and two hundred and twenty Temple servants[1] was the result. Laity, priests, Levites in the strict sense, Temple singers and guards, and slaves, were now ready to start. With women and children, the whole caravan must have numbered more than 5,000 souls.

It only remained to commend the undertaking to the care of the Almighty, and for this end a fast was proclaimed. Having told the king that the hand of Jehovah was on all them, for good, that sought Him, Ezra refused an escort of horse and foot which had been offered, to guard the caravan, with its tempting wealth, from the lawless Arabs.[2] The gold and silver, and sacred vessels, having finally been committed to the care of chosen priests and Levites, the tents were struck, and the journey began. The "holy things" were intrusted to "holy men," who were to devote themselves to their charge till it was delivered to the chief priests, Levites, and elders, in the chambers of the Temple at Jerusalem.[3]

Four months and a half were spent in the long march up the Euphrates, across the desert to Northern Syria, and then south, to Jerusalem.[4] "The hand of our God was upon us," says Ezra, and, thus protected, no enemy troubled them on the way.

The arrival of such an addition to their numbers must have been most welcome to the citizens of Jerusalem. It seemed as if, at last, the words of the prophets had been realized. The treasures of the heathen, borne by long trains of camels, were safe in the holy city; and a leader,

[1] Ezra viii. 18-20.
[2] Ezra viii. 22.
[3] Ezra viii. 29.
[4] Ezra vii. 9; viii. 31.

famous for his knowledge of the Law and zeal in its behalf, had come, with royal power to promote its observance. Ezra must have appeared, to not a few, the expected Messiah.

On the fourth day, the silver, gold, and sacred vessels were duly weighed and handed over to the Temple officials, represented by two priests and two Levites. The high priest Eliashib,[1] however, is not named, as if the stern precisian, now supreme in Church and State, had some reason for slighting him. Great public rejoicings, taking the Hebrew form of a religious festival, with huge sacrifices, welcomed the new-comers and their chief, and the commands of the Great King in favour of the Jews were sent off to the Persian officials, amid bright hopes and universal enthusiasm.

Ezra at once took his place as the supreme judge over the community, superseding the high priest himself and all other authorities; but five months and a half passed—from August to December—without any incident of moment. Meanwhile, the new ruler had been carefully noting things around him. With his staff of subordinate scribes, he marked the shortcomings of the community. A copy of the Law,[2] brought by him from Babylon, was the statute book, from which there was no appeal. His ideas, harsh and severe on many points, in the judgment of not a few, must, to some extent, have got abroad; among others, those on mixed marriages, which he fiercely condemned.

Some of the leading men, whether from conviction or policy, were ready to adopt Ezra's views, but there was a strong undercurrent of opposition, which only yielded to compulsion. Those, however, who were at one with him—it may be from conscientious scruples, raised by hearing

[1] Presumably, Joiakim would now be dead. [2] Ezra vii. 25.

extracts from his copy of the Law—appeared before Ezra on the sixteenth day of the ninth month (nearly our December), and informed him, with many expressions of pain, that marriages with women of non-Jewish races had hitherto been common in Jerusalem and Judah, among all classes.[1] The Law, strictly interpreted, was beyond question against these alliances. In Exodus[2] and Deuteronomy[3] such relations with the native races of Canaan were strictly forbidden; but the deputation which now appeared before Ezra added to these the names of peoples—the Ammonites, Moabites, and Egyptians—not formally excluded from marriages with Israelites, and even in later times permitted by the Sanhedrim to perform such alliances,[4] though they were apparently condemned in the historical books as contrary to the spirit of the Law.[5] The prohibition quoted could indeed be only constructively applicable, for most of the races mentioned had long ceased to exist as separate communities, having for many generations been fused into the general population of Palestine.

Such a state of things amongst those who had left Babylon to rebuild the Temple shocked Ezra to the soul. It was no mitigation of the sin, in his eyes, that the question of mixed marriages had always been viewed liberally in the

[1] Ezra ix. 1. The laity are always put first in Ezra's enumeration of classes. A lesson of modesty to some in our own day.

[2] Exod. xxxiv. 12-16. [3] Deut. vii. 1-5. [4] *Hamburger*, ii. 294.

[5] Judg. iii. 5. 1 Kings xi. 2. Neh. xiii. 2. The note of Graetz is worth translating. It runs thus: As legal warrant for regarding it as a breach of the law, Ezra refers (ix. 12) to Deut. xxiii. 3. But this prohibition refers only to the Moabites and Ammonites. Ezra needed therefore to generalize the transgression, but for this he had no direct authority from the Pentateuch. He was therefore forced to fall back on an indirect authority (ix. 11). This is an allusion to Lev. xviii. 24, 25, and to Exod. xxxiv. 15, ff., since the Canaanitish races and idolaters are there referred to, while the families into which the Jews had married were neither. *Geschichte*, vol. ii. 2, p. 131. The prohibition in Deut. xxiii. 3, refers to the reception of the peoples named as members of the nation—their being made full citizens.

past. The thousands of different races [1]—Egyptians, Arabs, and the formerly sovereign Hyksos or Shepherds, among others—who had fled from Egypt with the Jews, had gradually been absorbed into the general population by intermarriages. Moses himself was the son of an illegal marriage of nephew and aunt,[2] and he had, in succession, married a Midianite and an Ethiopian, or Cushite. The two sons of Naomi had married Moabites, and Ruth, the Moabitess, had been the great-grandmother of David himself.[3] Moreover, even he, the hero-king and the idol of the nation, had married aliens.[4] Solomon had been noted for his many foreign wives, and the example of royalty is catching. Rehoboam was the son of an Ammonite woman;[5] Ahab married Jezebel of Tyre, and, through her, tainted the Jewish purity of all the subsequent kings of Judah. In older times, moreover, the founder of the illustrious house of Jerahmeelites, in the days of Eli, had been an Egyptian, to whom a Hebrew chief had given his daughter as wife.[6] A Syrian mother had been the founder of the great family of Machir, the Manassite, of Gilead.[7] Marriages with women taken from a defeated enemy were allowed by the Law, and we find a sister of David married to an Ishmaelite,[8] while Samson had Philistine wives. That this habitual crossing of the Hebrew blood with that of other races continued to Ezra's day in very general practice, is seen, moreover, from the frequent cautions in the Book of Proverbs against the "strange," that is, the foreign woman.[9] It had, indeed, been impossible hitherto to enforce rigid isolation from surrounding races; all classes of the popula-

[1] Exod. xii. 38. Num. xi. 4, etc.
[2] Exod. vi. 20. Num. xxvi. 59. Lev. xviii. 12.
[3] Ruth i. 4; iv. 22.
[4] 2 Sam. iii. 3.
[5] 1 Kings xiv. 21.
[6] 1 Chron. ii. 34.
[7] 1 Chron. vii. 14.
[8] 2 Chron. ii. 17.
[9] Prov. v. 3; vi. 24; vii. 5.

tion, in every age, had more or less evaded it,[1] so that there must have been very few Jews indeed who were not of more or less mixed blood.

But the usage of a thousand years was to be abruptly broken off. To Ezra, the "holy seed" of Israel was polluted by marriage with a member of any other race, even where idolatry had been abandoned, and Jehovah was worshipped. For this, it cannot be doubted, was the case with such alliances, in a community like that of Jerusalem, stern Puritans, who had left their native land, Babylon, and all they had, through zeal for God. But to the hard and narrow mind of Ezra, it mattered nothing that the wives of non-Jewish blood were proselytes, obedient to the faith. It was enough that they were not Hebrews of the Hebrews, pure in their descent on both sides. According to him, heathen, who had accepted the Jewish faith, might be admitted into the congregation, but only on an inferior footing, as a separate and lower caste. Like the Gibeonites of old, and the Temple slaves, who, though incorporated with the State for more than a thousand years, and Jews in creed, were yet kept distinct, and prohibited from intermarriage with Israelites; the proselytes from the peoples round, however high in social position, refined by education, or sincere in orthodoxy, must be kept apart, as a class with which no Jew could condescend to ally himself. Pride of race had much to do with this; but there was, besides, a dread lest close relations with minds more liberal than their own, should lead any Jews to more generous views on points of the ceremonial law than the dogmatism of Ezra permitted. He was, in fact, the prototype of men like Dunstan, or Balfour

[1] Judg. iii. 6. 2 Sam. xi. 3. 1 Kings xi. 1; xvi. 31.

of Burley, or the Puritans who banished Roger Williams from Massachusetts. Intensely sincere, he was also bitterly intolerant and despotic. His marriage law was not justified by that of Moses, and was so impracticable, that the Rabbis themselves modified it in later times. But he was led to it by a fear which the circumstances of the times amply explain. The reception of proselytes or half-proselytes to full and equal citizenship might, in his opinion, corrupt the high tone of the community, by relaxing the superstitious observance of ceremonial details, which his intensely ritualistic mind regarded as the safeguard of the religious life.

To one with views like his, such a state of things as was now disclosed was an overpowering calamity. Even priests and Levites had been guilty of the abhorred marriages. His excitable Eastern nature was overwhelmed with sorrow and mortification. He had received the deputation in the open air, but now, as the high dignitaries ended their confession, he could not restrain his distress. Rising to his feet, he rent his outer and then his inner robe, in his immeasurable grief, and, like one all but frenzied, tore his hair and his beard, till, after a time, he sank silent and motionless on the ground, where he lay till the hour of the evening sacrifice, amidst a surrounding crowd, stupefied and confounded. Then rising from the earth, and again tearing his robes, he strode to the forecourt of the Temple, and falling on his knees before the multitude assembled below for worship, he poured forth his soul aloud, in agonizing prayer, with his hands stretched out to Jehovah. His people, he cried, had come back from Babylon, no better for the terrible discipline. They had fallen again into their old sins, though God had spared a remnant of them,

through favour of the Persian kings. If they again transgressed His Law, by marriages with the peoples of the land, what remained but that even that remnant would be destroyed by the just wrath of the Eternal? Weeping aloud as he spoke, and casting himself down before the Temple in an agony of soul, his emotion spread to the throng of men, women, and children, who crowded towards him, to catch his words. That the great Ezra, illustrious as "*the* priest," and no less so as "*the* scribe," but perhaps still more feared as the commissioner of the Great King, with life and death in his hands, should be thus unmanned, implied terrible, though hitherto unsuspected, guilt, on the part of the community, in the state of things that thus unnerved him. His sighs and tears provoking theirs, the Temple courts resounded with wailing.

Ezra was destined to triumph. Among the clans which had, in part, returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, nearly eighty years before, were the Benai Elam,[1] of whom 1,254 were among the first Pilgrim Fathers. Seventy-one more had just come with Ezra,[2] true and loyal worshippers of Jehovah. Overpowered by the moving scene, one of these, while Ezra was still on his knees, after his prayer, broke out into a loud confession of guilt, for himself and his brethren, in the custom denounced. They had sinned against their God by having taken strange wives, of the people of the land. But now there was hope for Israel.[3] Let them make a covenant with their God to put away all the wives, with their children!

Such a proposal committed all present to the course Ezra demanded, without their being heard in self-defence. Seiz-

[1] Ezra ii. 7. Neh. vii. 12. 1 Esdr. v. 12.
[2] Ezra viii. 7. 1 Esdr. viii. 33.
[3] Ezra x. 3.

ing the advantage, Ezra instantly rose and, turning to the chief priests, Levites, and laity assembled, called on them to swear adherence to the speaker's words. Nor could they refuse. Their wives and children had done no wrong, and it might have been expected that natural affection would have pleaded in their behalf. But pitiless legalism, armed with the power of life and death, and of confiscation of goods, had decided against them ; and in the excitement and fear of the moment, they hastened to clear themselves from a double offence, by committing one that revolts every noble feeling.

The reform thus begun was to be carried to its bitter end. Ezra would neither eat nor drink till he had thoroughly gained the day and bent the community to his will. Like religious enthusiasts in general, he believed his doctrine to be from God, and forgot even his natural wants till what he deemed so mortal a sin on the part of his people was removed. All the population were accordingly summoned to appear in the great open space before the Temple, within three days, on pain of confiscation of all they had, and exclusion from the rights of citizenship.[1]

It was December, and the winter rains were falling heavily when the great assembly gathered. Squatting, in Eastern fashion, on the ground, they trembled, we are told, partly from the cold, but perhaps more from excitement and dread, as they awaited the rising of Ezra to address them.[2] His words were few and to the point. They had transgressed, and taken strange wives, to increase the sin of Israel. Let them confess their guilt to Jehovah, and do His pleasure, by separating themselves from their non-Jewish partners.

[1] Ezra x. 8. [2] Ezra x. 9.

Whatever may have been the private feelings of some in the vast crowd, there was no alternative but to obey. "As thou hast said, so we must do," rose loudly from all. There was no arguing with a man who could strip them of their goods, cut off their rights as citizens, or even take their lives. Besides, had not Ezra assured them that the fierce wrath of God would destroy them, if they did not obey him? But they had still calmness enough to object to action on the moment, in a matter so grave. There were many cases to examine, the weather was too stormy to remain out of doors, and the work too great to be hurried over. A great public assembly was not a fit body to enter into such a question. Let a court be formed in Jerusalem, of the chief men of each tribe, and let all who had wives of alien blood come before it, at an appointed time, with the elders and judges of their respective cities, that each case might be carefully examined.[1] At the moment, four men alone, one of them a Levite, had the courage to oppose the repudiation of women who had married them in good faith, and, as all had thought, with due legality; but not a few ultimately refused to break up their homes and turn adrift their innocent wives and children.

A court presided over by Ezra, with the heads of the great clans as assessors, soon completed this questionable reform. In two months, a multitude of blameless women of all ranks were divorced. Among these were the wives of the four sons of Joshua, the high priest who came from Babylon with Zerubbabel, themselves dignified priests; the wives of a number of priests of the clans of Immer, Harim, and Pashur; of Levites, of Temple singers, and of laymen

[1] Ezra x. 15. For "were employed about this matter," read, "stood up against this." Gesenius. Bertheau. Keil.

of many different clans.[1] Innocent mothers and helpless children were alike turned adrift,[2] in the name of religion; so unnatural is fanaticism, when it presumes to speak for God. But the transaction did not pass unpunished. The races insulted in the persons of the dismissed wives and children, were ere long bitterly to avenge them.

This politic, but inhuman, revolution, however fitted to create a race of narrow fanatics, like Ezra himself, can hardly be regarded as having been advantageous to the nation on higher and more worthy grounds. The intermingling of divided but noble stocks, results in the great and beneficial development of the bodily and mental powers of their offspring. The Greeks reached their full grandeur, only when the Ionic and Doric tribes were fused together. The Romans and the English, the two races who have best understood the permanent maintenance of a world-wide empire, were, or are, mixed peoples, in contrast to the unmixed Germans or Slavs. The claim advanced for his race by Disraeli, that the Jews are the first people of the world, and owe this arrogated superiority to their having kept themselves apart from all other races, is mere Hebrew pride, and contempt of humanity, outside their own pale, for they are by no means superior, as a people, to other stocks, and they never were a pure-blooded race, as has been shewn, though they have crossed only, or chiefly, with Orientals, whose qualities, better and worse, were on a level with their own. Nor are the claims, thus made for them, supported by the testimony of history, for the Jews never, as a race, played a great, or even a respectable part, in the

[1] Ezra x. 20–43.

[2] Ezra x. 44. Bertheau, Graetz, and Kuenen translate the second clause of this verse, "and some of them put away their wives and children." In Neh vi. 18 we find an instance of a mixed marriage still upheld.

story of the nations. The momentary gleam of importance given them by the achievements of David, faded away under Solomon, and the grand character of Judas Maccabæus is, if possible, the brighter, from the contrast it offers to Jewish history as a whole. They have, it is true, developed, in all ages, a wonderful power of making gain; a natural genius for affairs, great and small; and have produced many brilliant men, in law, diplomacy, and literature; but, as a people, they have no such roll-call of immortals as can be boasted by almost any of the "Gentile" races whom they agree in affecting to despise, as their inferiors. No. A people which gathers into itself the highest qualities of related tribes, must ever be superior, in bodily vigour, mental energy, and force of character, to one which shuts itself in from mankind.

For the next fourteen years, till B.C. 445, we know nothing of the history of Judah or Jerusalem. In that year, however, a second great personage, destined to exert a lasting influence on the future of Israel, arrived from Persia. The Great King lived during summer at Ecbatana,[1] up in the Median hills, and during winter at Susa, 200 miles south, at the foot of the mountains of Susiana, on their western side, where the warmth of the Persian Gulf was tempered by upland breezes. Here, among the officials at the court of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah, a Jew, held the confidential post of cup-bearer, which admitted him to constant intercourse with his master. To hold such a post, implied the enjoyment of the king's special confidence, as only an official who was unreservedly trusted could be allowed to discharge duties so readily offering opportunities to a traitor. That Xerxes should have had Esther, a

[1] Ezra vi. 2.

Jewess, as one of his queens, and Mordecai as his grand vizier, accounts for the favour of his son towards Nehemiah. The tradition of the wisdom and fidelity of Daniel, moreover, might well excite a kindly feeling to at least some of the race.



Cup-bearers at the Ancient Persian Court.

Josephus tells us,[1] that as Nehemiah was walking one day outside the walls of Susa, some strangers, making for the city, travel-worn as if by a long journey, were overheard by him discoursing in his own language—the Hebrew. Nothing touches the heart in a strange land

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. v. 6.

more than one's mother tongue ; he went up to them, therefore, and, introducing himself, found they were from Judah. To inquire respecting Jerusalem and its people naturally followed ; but the news was sad. The walls of the city had been mostly rebuilt, and the town gates had been set up, within the last few years, but the representations of Rehum, apparently the Persian governor of Palestine, and of his secretary, had led to a command from the court at Susa, to stop the rebuilding of the city and walls at once.[1] Armed with this authority, the neighbouring races—infuriated at the rejection of their friendly offers of assistance, by Zerubbabel, years before, and still more so by Ezra's recent insult, in sending back to their homes all the wives of non-Jewish race found in Jerusalem and Judæa—had attacked Jerusalem, and, after fierce struggles, had broken down the newly restored walls and burned the gates with fire.[2] Nor was this all ; the country was pillaged in open day, and many Jews carried off into slavery by nightly surprises, while the corpses of murdered men were often found on the roads. At such a recital Nehemiah broke into tears, amidst which his grief unburdened itself in the cry suggested by the Psalms and Lamentations:[3] "How long, O Jehovah, wilt Thou permit Thy people to suffer ?" Lingering at the gate, in his sorrow, forgetful of the lapse of time, he was only roused when reminded that his presence was needed in the palace. The king was about to sit down to supper ; he must hurry off, to minister as cup-bearer. Struck with his dejection, the king noticed it to him, and, having heard the cause of his

[1] Ezra iv. 9–23.

[2] Neh. i. 3. It is most natural to ascribe the disaster to this time.

[3] Ps. xiii. 1. Lam. v. 20. See also Deut. xxxi. 17. Ps. xliv. 24; lxxxviii. 14; lxxxix. 46.

grief, gave him permission to go to Palestine and put right the matters that troubled him.

Nehemiah's own account is, that one of his brothers,[1] who had been away to Palestine, returned with a dismal account of the state of things in the Jewish community there. Like Daniel, Ezra, and other pious Israelites of the Exile, the cup-bearer was eminently a man of prayer, and carried his sorrow at once to God, "mourning, fasting and praying for days, before the God of heaven."[2] It was no passing sorrow. The thought of the city of the sepulchres of his fathers lying waste,[3] grieved his soul. For four months—December to April (Kislew to Nisan), it lay heavy on his heart. Then, at last, as he was giving wine to the king, who was sitting, according to Persian custom, with his favourite queen, the sorrow that had long clouded a face formerly cheerful, was noticed. The abject terror natural in the court of an Eastern despot, is marked by Nehemiah's statement, that when the change in his looks thus arrested attention, he was "very sore afraid." But his touching answer disarmed suspicion. He was sorrowing over the desolation of the city where his fathers lay buried. "For what then," said Artaxerxes, "dost thou make request?" "So I prayed," says Nehemiah, "to the God of heaven. And I said to the king, 'If it please the king, and if thy slave have found favour in thy sight; that thou wouldest send me to Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.'"[4]

[1] He is called "my brother," Neh. vii. 2. [2] Neh. i. 4. [3] Neh. ii. 3, 5.

[4] Neh. ii. 1–6. The importance of the office of cup-bearer, is seen in Herod., iii. 34, where, incidentally, a vivid picture is given of the awful despotism of the Persian court. Cambyses, in mere sport, shoots the son of the cup-bearer through the heart, and then asks his father, "if he ever saw a man take a truer aim." Xenophon (*Cyrop.*, i. 3) speaks of the cup-bearer of Astyages, grandfather of Cyrus, as the most favoured of the officers of the palace. It was his part to introduce to the king

Leave of absence for an indefinite time was at once granted, the great income of his office being apparently continued.[1] Letters, moreover, were given him for the various governors of provinces on the road, authorizing his free passage, and requiring him to be furnished with all aids. Orders were further put in his hands for timber from the royal forests,[2] for the city gates, the governor's palace, and the fortress on the Temple hill. An escort of military officers and of cavalry was also appointed him, and thus protected, he passed on to Jerusalem as a high official of the imperial court, taking with him a large body of attendants and personal servants.[3]

That one of their brethren should have received such an appointment was a great event for the Jewish community. Ezra had been a judge and magistrate under the Persian governor, but Nehemiah was himself the Pasha of Jerusalem and Judah, and as such supreme. No inferior officer could have carried out the great task before him. A city without walls and gates, was, in such times, the prey of every assailant. Zechariah[4] had fondly pictured a time when bulwarks would not be needed; but it was still in the future, and Nehemiah, like all his contemporaries, saw that they were essential to the continued existence of the community. His one thought, therefore, was to fortify the city against all attacks.

The arrival of a Jewish governor mortified the enemies of Jerusalem, as much as it gratified its members. To the dignity and absolute authority of a Pasha, he added the

those who had important business with him, and to keep back such as had matters of less weight. This, alone, must have given him great power. The emoluments, moreover, seem to have been large.

[1] It is difficult, otherwise, to understand the wealth of Nehemiah while in Judah See afterwards.

[2] Neh. ii. 8.

[3] Neh. iv. 10, 16, 17, 23; v. 10, 14–16; xiii. 19.

[4] Zech. ii. 4.

influence of private wealth, which he used with a noble generosity; relieving his brethren of the burden of maintaining him and his court. Indeed, during all his tenure of office, he not only made no requisitions, and levied no imposts for his rightful dues; but, besides maintaining himself and his numerous household and visitors, alike, at his own cost, kept open house for residents and retinue, and was princely in his general benefactions.[1]

That he had come to promote the interests of his people, was at once understood by friend and foe, but he prudently kept details to himself. It was vital that his plans should not be prematurely disclosed. The first steps toward their accomplishment were therefore taken with all secrecy. In the darkness of the third or fourth night after his arrival —for he lost no time—he started on horseback,[2] with a few attendants on foot, to examine the state of the walls. Descending into the ravine of Hinnom by the west port, somewhere near the present Jaffa gate, he advanced to the Spring of the Dragon,[3]—a spot not clearly identified, unless it refer to a popular fancy respecting the intermittent flow of the waters of Siloam, at the south-west of the city. To gain this point, he had to pass the gate at the south-west of Zion, outside which were thrown the dust and sweepings of the town. He wished to see for himself the state of the walls and gates. Proceeding along by Siloam, eastward, to the king's pool, masses of ruin blocked the way, so that he had to dismount. Pressing on afoot, he followed, as he best could, the line of broken fortifications, till he had made the circuit of the whole city, and once more reached the gate through which he had ridden out on his survey. So

[1] Neh. v. 14–18. [2] Neh. ii. 12.
[3] Geikie's *Life and Words of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 88.

secretly had all this been effected, that neither the high city officials, the priests, the great men, nor the burghers, knew anything of it. But, once thoroughly acquainted with the actual state of affairs, Nehemiah forthwith assembled the principal citizens, and announced to them his resolution to rebuild the walls. Nor were they left to question or hesitate. Instant action was required; and the summons was promptly obeyed. The whole wall was portioned off, in short lengths, to different bodies of volunteers, to the rich city guilds, and to wealthy and public-spirited citizens, who undertook to restore them. The enthusiasm of the governor was contagious. He believed that God was with him, and inspired the people with the same confidence. Still more, he informed them that he held a firman from the Great King[1] sanctioning all that he proposed. All classes threw themselves into the work with the greatest energy. To Eliashib, the high priest, and his subordinates, was assigned the building of the sheep gate, at the north end of the east wall. The men of Jericho were to build the piece next. The guilds of the goldsmiths, apothecaries, and merchants,[2] had their separate tasks. The men of Tekoa alone, through their chiefs, ignobly refused "to put their necks to the work of their Lord."[3] The Gibeonites and those of Mizpah, apparently the hill Nebi Samwil, north of Jerusalem, though not under the jurisdiction of Nehemiah, but in the territory of the governor of Syria,[4] cheerfully took the share allotted them. Shallum, the municipal chief of one-half of Jerusalem, became responsible, with his daughters, for a piece.[5] Even the Levites had a share allotted them, and so had the

[1] Neh. ii. 18.
[2] Neh. iii. 8, 31, 32.
[3] Neh. iii. 5.
[4] Neh. iii. 7.
[5] Neh. iii. 12.

priests who lived in the country round Jerusalem.[1] Thirty five volunteers are named who accepted and completed the parts of the great undertaking committed to them. The municipal chiefs of the second half of Jerusalem; the people of Zanoah, south of Hebron;[2] the municipal chief of the district of Mizpah; of the half district of Beth-zur, north of Hebron;[3] of the two halves of the district of Keilah, in the Hebron mountains;[4] and of Mizpah itself—all helped. Town and country shewed themselves alike resolute in the great task. Its distribution into sections brings the ancient city, as they toiled to fortify it, vividly before us, by the landmarks named. The sheep gate, the towers of Meah and Hananeel, the fish gate, the gate of the old city, the broad wall, the tower of the furnaces, the king's garden, the stairs from the city of David, the sepulchres of David and the kings, the barracks of David's "mighty men," the armoury, the upper tower of the king's palace, the guard-house, where Jeremiah had been confined, the out-lying tower of Ophel, the quarter of the Nethinim, and the higher part of the wall at the corner, successively rise before us;—spots once so well known, but now mere names for well-nigh two thousand years.

The task before the citizens was a heavy one for all. To remove the mounds of rubbish from the broken parts of the walls, and dress the stones afresh, involved immense labour; for the number of workmen and labourers was limited in so small a population,[5] and there were no funds with which to hire outside help. Everything had to be done by the people themselves. The whole circuit of the

[1] Neh. iii. 22; xii. 28.
[2] Conder, *Handbook*, p. 411. Keil mentions a Zanua' *west* of Jerusalem.
[3] Conder, p. 407.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 417.
[5] Neh. iv. 2, 10.

walls needed repair or entire rebuilding, and the gateways, when finished, required huge, broad-leaved gates, with their massive bars, bolts, and locks. The thickness and height of the defences, and the irregularities of the ground, made the task still heavier. As a whole, the community was in an admirable mood, but the oppressive toil, under a fierce sun and with imperfect appliances,[1] soon broke down not a few, even before the rubbish had been cleared away.[2]

Another difficulty was even more serious. While some of the volunteer labourers and workmen were well-to-do, others depended on their earnings, and in the present case, no wages were paid to any one. Many were thus reduced to the direst straits to support themselves and their families, and pay the taxes exacted by the Persian Government. That they did not withdraw from Nehemiah's service and seek remunerative employment, seems to shew that they were pressed for the work, as their fathers had been under Solomon, and dared not leave it. At such a time, universal good feeling might have been expected. The simple wants of Orientals are easily satisfied. There were rich men in Jerusalem, and in any Western nation a fund would have been raised by these for the maintenance of their brethren, toiling for the common good. But instead of this, the wealthy seized the chance of driving shameful bargains with the starving workers. In spite of the strict prohibition of usury, by the Law,[3] money for food was doled out only in return for mortgages on the small farms, vineyards, olive-yards, and houses, of the peasant labourers, or for the personal liberty of their sons and daughters, who thus became slaves. To get bread and oil, and to pay the

[1] Baskets filled by hand are still used in the East, even in digging out huge canal beds. [2] Neh. iv. 10. [3] Exod. xxii. 25. Lev. xxv. 36.

taxes, debts were thus incurred which could never be met. Children and land, alike, were virtually lost. Conduct equally disgraceful had been shewn to the exiles first carried off by Nebuchadnezzar. Their brethren left behind had bought up their goods and property for a trifle, instead of generously paying a fair value for them, to help the unfortunates in the land of their banishment. Human nature is very much the same everywhere, but I do not remember another instance of such greed of money and meanness of soul as these two cases exhibited. The professions of penitence and reform under Ezra had clearly been worthless in too many cases—mere waves of excited feeling, very soon passing away.

Such heartlessness on the one side, and misery on the other, roused the generous indignation of Nehemiah. Calling together the money lenders, he rebuked them sternly, and then summoned them to appear before a general assembly of the citizens. There he turned on them with scathing words. He, himself, he told them, had, to his utmost, redeemed Jewish slaves from the heathen, but they were buying and selling their brethren. Let them at once cancel all their bonds,[1] and give back the property they had taken, remitting the debts due to them. If they could be paid hereafter, without interest, as the debtors were able, let it be so; if not, let the debt be a free gift. He, his assistants, and his retinue, might demand money and corn, but neither he nor they did so. Let all that was needed be freely advanced to every one now. Would they forget the fear of God, and bring down the reproach of the heathen on the whole Jewish community?

[1] Instead of "also the hundredth part of the money" (Neh. v. 11), read "remit this exaction of a pledge."

Forced by very shame to comply, the offenders consented to follow Nehemiah's counsel, and were bound to their assent by a solemn oath administered by the priests.[1] "So let every man who does not stand to his promise, be shaken by God out of his house and earnings," cried Nehemiah, shaking out his robe as he did so.

The difficulties from without were no less formidable than those in Jerusalem itself. The unwise narrowness of Zerubbabel, followed by the still harsher dismissal of non-Jewish wives by Ezra, had excited a furious hatred toward the Hebrew community. Three enemies, especially, threatened its very existence. The foremost of these was Sanballat, "the Horonite," or inhabitant of Bethhoron, formerly part of the territory of Ephraim,[2] but in Nehemiah's day included in Samaria.[3] His name has been thought to mean "man of Neballat," a village about four miles north-west of Lydda,[4] and about fifteen miles slightly south-east of Joppa, on the western slope of the central hills.[5] He appears to have been the Persian governor of the Samaritan district, or at least to have held some civil or military command. Josephus calls him a Samaritan or "Cuthean" by birth,[6] but, in any case, he was not a Jew. At this time he had no personal relations with Jerusalem; but he subsequently married his daughter, Nicaso, to Manasseh, a grandson of the high priest Eliashib, apparently while Nehemiah was absent in Persia.[7] It is not improbable that he had already risen to be the Persian governor on the north of Judah. Energetic, influential, and keen tongued, he was the leading spirit in the opposition

[1] Neh. v. 12. [2] Josh. xvi. 3, 5; xviii. 13. [3] Bertheau.
[4] Kneucker, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iv. p. 306. [5] See vol. ii. p. 472.
[6] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vii. 2, 8.
[7] Jos., *Ant.*, XI. vii. 2. Neh. xiii. 28. Ewald, vol. v. p. 213.

to Nehemiah from without.[1] A second in the bitter triumvirate was Tobiah, an Ammonite, originally, it would seem, a slave,[2] but now in a high position as satrap, or Persian resident, in Ammon, across the Jordan. Such elevations, though strange to us, are common in Eastern despotisms. His fierce opposition to the fortification of Jerusalem excited against him the special dislike of Nehemiah, who seldom mentions his name without contemptuously adding, "the slave." Unfortunately, he had allies of high social position in Jerusalem itself; the stern puritanism of Ezra and Nehemiah being resented by many leading families. Into one of these—a dignified priestly household—Tobiah married, and he was also able to make a similar union for his son.[3] Through these channels he kept up communications with the disaffected party within the walls, and thus, in a measure, paralyzed Nehemiah, by the proof of treachery even among those round him, from whom he should have received the most hearty support. The third open enemy was Gashma, or Geshem, "the Arabian,"[4] who seems to have been chief of the Arabs south of Palestine, and, as Ewald thinks, possibly the founder of the future Nabathean kingdom. For the time he was an active ally of Sanballat and Tobiah.

On receiving intelligence of Nehemiah's appointment by the Persian court, Sanballat and Tobiah had been greatly annoyed, but they did not dare openly to oppose the firman of Artaxerxes.[5] Nor did they believe that the project of rebuilding the walls, already broken down, perhaps more

[1] Ezra iv. 23; Neh. iv. 2; Stanley, vol. iii. p. 133; and W. A. Wright, *Dict. of Bible*, vol. iii. p. 1522, speak of Sanballat as a Moabite, making "the Horonite" = man of Horonaim in Moab. But he certainly would have been called the Moabite had he been of that hated race.

[2] Neh. ii. 10, 19.

[3] Neh. vi. 3, 6, 12, 14, 17, 18; xiii. 4, 7

[4] Neh. ii. 19; vi. 1, 2, 6.

[5] Neh. ii. 10.

than once, since the Return, could be seriously entertained by so feeble a community. Mocking its weakness before his officials and the Persian garrison of Samaria, Sanballat pretended to wonder what the citizens meant, to begin such a task. "Will they leave it in the hands of God? Or raise the walls by offering sacrifices? Will they get a miracle done for them, to finish the walls in a day? Will they make the rubbish heaps come out themselves, as if alive?" "You don't need to be afraid," answered Tobiah, joining this ridicule; "a jackal climbing up over any work they may do, will knock it all down!" Taunts and gibes like these stung Nehemiah to the quick. But he was not the man to be turned aside by a laugh. Uttering a bitter malediction on the mockers,[1] he pressed on his task more vigorously than ever.

Thanks to his energy, and the willing zeal of the people, great part of the ruins was cleared away, the gaps in the walls filled up, and the whole enterprise well advanced. The possibility of his success was thus no longer doubtful, if his progress could not be quickly stopped by open violence. A league was therefore formed between Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Philistines of Ashdod, to attack Jerusalem, and destroy what had been done. But Nehemiah, well served by his spies, posted sentinels and pickets, and "made prayer to God," and urged on the builders. It was the crisis of the undertaking. So many workmen being withdrawn to furnish guards, day and night, the officials had at last to report that the toil of clearing away the mounds of rubbish, to let the masons get to work, and of carrying the stones for them, had completely worn out the labourers, and that the building of the wall must

[1] Neh. iv. 4-6.

stop. Meanwhile, Jews from the country districts disclosed the power of the enemy and their threatening designs, and urged their brethren from different localities to return home.[1] The foe, it was said, would burst upon them suddenly, and put an end to the work by a general massacre. But Nehemiah was not to be daunted. Summoning all the men able to bear arms, and giving them swords, spears, and bows, he set them in such open spaces behind the walls as were weakest. They could thus guard the most dangerous spots, and while at once seeing the approach of the enemy, also shew that they were prepared for him.[2] Nor did he omit stirring appeals to all, to fight manfully for hearth and altar. Such vigour had the success it deserved. The allies soon heard of the measures taken to baffle them, and, seeing their plans discovered, disbanded their men. But there was no relaxation of vigilance on the part of Nehemiah. Half of the people were kept at the building of the walls, from the earliest dawn till the appearing of the stars,[3] their swords at their side and their spears near at hand, while the other half, fully armed, kept watch behind, their leaders with them; Nehemiah, ever wakeful, and everywhere present, having a trumpeter at his side, to sound an alarm on the instant, if needed. At night only a portion of the guard remained on duty, the rest taking sleep, to be ready for the next day. Neither Nehemiah, however, nor his household, nor bodyguard, ever took off their clothes.[4]

Fired by such enthusiasm, "the people had a mind to work," and the walls rapidly drew near completion. It only remained to hang the great two-leaved doors in the

[1] I have incorporated the renderings of Neh. iv. 12, given by Herzfeld, Bertheau, and Keil.
[2] Neh. iv. 13.
[3] Neh. iv. 21. Hebrew
[4] Neh. iv. 23.

gate-spaces. Sanballat and Tobiah, hitherto foiled, determined, therefore, to make a last effort to effect their purpose. Pretending to wish a conference with Nehemiah, they invited him to come out to them, to Ono—the present village of Ana—on the Maritime Plain, about thirty miles north-west of Jerusalem,[1] their object being to take him prisoner. This transparent device was repeated four times, but the only answer given by Nehemiah was that he could not allow the work to cease by any such visit. An open letter from Sanballat, pretending a friendly interest in the governor, was the next scheme. Rumours were everywhere afloat, he said, that rebellion against Persia was intended, Nehemiah himself designing to be proclaimed king, as soon as the walls were finished. Prophets, the letter went on, had been appointed by him to prepare the people for this. It was desirable, therefore, that he should come out and consult with Sanballat. But he was too shrewd to be thus easily trapped. There was no truth, he said, in the alleged reports. They were only inventions. He would not come.

Yet there was much to make a less earnest man blench in his purpose. Traitors were busy within the city. A number of prophets, and a prophetess, Noadiah, had been bribed by Sanballat and Tobiah, to stir up discontent among the citizens and hamper Nehemiah.[2] Some of the chief citizens, moreover, influenced by Tobiah's marriage connections,[3] kept up an active correspondence with him, sending him letters and receiving replies.[4] Every word of

[1] Conder and Kiepert's Map.

[2] Neh. vi. 14.

[3] Neh. vi. 18. Of these, Shecaniah was a prominent man of the great family of Arah (Ezra ii. 5). Meshullam (Neh. iii. 4, 30) was one of the helpers in repairing the walls. Eliashib, the high priest, was also allied to Tobiah (Neh. xiii. 4). Tobiah means "pleasing to Jehovah." His son's name, Johanan, means "given by Jehovah," so that it is the equivalent of Theodore. They were probably Israelites of one of the Ten Tribes, but had apparently been settled, perhaps for generations, in Ammon (Neh. ii. 10).

[4] Neh. vi. 17.

Nehemiah was reported to the enemy.[1] One treacherous prophet, shutting himself up in his house, as if in terror of his life, warned the governor that he knew of his murder in the night being determined, and urged that the two should retire into the Holy Place of the Temple for security, and shut the doors. But this scheme also failed. "Should a man in his position flee?" replied Nehemiah. Moreover, the Holy Place was not to be entered by a layman. How could he, therefore, enter it and live? He would not go.[2]

The walls having at last been finished, the gates set up, and a body of guards for them and those for the Temple, duly organized,[3] Nehemiah appointed his brother Hanani, and a trusted and devout officer named Hananiah, the commandant of the Persian fortress at the north-west edge of the Temple precincts, as joint prefects of the city. In ordinary times the Temple guards alone protected the sanctuary and its grounds, opening and closing the gates. But at such a crisis, the singers and the Levites were told off to strengthen them. Orders were further issued, that the gates of the city were not to be opened till the sun was high, and the day warders had mounted guard, in place of those who had been on duty through the night. They, in their turn, were to be relieved, after the gates were closed and barred at sunset. The citizens, moreover, were required to patrol the town as night watchmen, each in his own quarter.[4]

A serious difficulty, however, still remained. The circuit of the walls was great, but the houses within were few and sparse, so that wide vacant spaces of ruins separated

[1] Neh. vi. 19.
[2] Neh. vi. 10-12. For "to save his life," read "and live"
[3] 1 Chron. ix. 17-27; xxvi. 12-19. [4] Neh. vii. 3.

the small population and weakened their powers of defence. The prudent governor, therefore, resolved to increase the number of citizens, by transferring families from the country to Jerusalem, that their dwellings might fill up the unsightly gaps in the streets, and the number of burgesses able to man the walls be effectively increased.

A public register of the whole Jewish community in the land, carefully drawn up under Zerubbabel, afforded a trustworthy basis for the projected measure. To make it complete, an assembly of the people was summoned, that all who had joined the colony since Zerubbabel's census might be added to it.[1] The time chosen was the seventh month—part of our September and October—the same month as that in which the great public assembly had been held, years before, to consecrate the new altar, and restore the long interrupted sacrifices.[2] On the present occasion, however, it was determined to take advantage of the gathering of the people, for other weighty national objects. Besides the filling up of the family registration, various measures of the highest importance demanded action.

The Puritan fervour which had led to the Return, though it had lost much of its deep religious feeling, still continued in all its intensity as a national sentiment. The cessation of Temple worship during the Exile, and the abhorrence of idolatry which had sprung up, turned attention more than ever before to the sacred writings of the race. The Law was already the object of superstitious veneration; the Temple and its sacrifices taking only a second place in the public regard. Schools for its study, established by Ezra and his disciples, had spread widely in Babylon. The

[1] Neh. vii. 5. Nehemiah gives the register taken at first in vii. 5-73. Ezra ii.
[2] Ezra iii. 1.

new order of scribes were unceasing in their efforts to indoctrinate the whole people with what they believed to be its teaching. It was resolved, therefore, that at this first public gathering of Judah, after the restoration of the city walls, the reading and exposition of the Law should have the chief place. The people themselves desired it. To attract every one, a great feast was appointed to be held for the solemn dedication of the newly built city walls. On the day fixed, the whole population assembled at Jerusalem, even the women leaving their wonted seclusion, and bringing their children with them. Before the festival opened, however, a request was formally made through the elders, that the Law might be read aloud to the whole assembly, by Ezra and his assistants.[1] All were intensely anxious to hear the words that God had spoken from the Mount to their fathers.

The request was too thoroughly gratifying to the Reformer to be for a moment denied. The open space before the water gate, on the south-east of the Temple, was appointed for the solemn gathering, and thither, at the time fixed, Ezra and his colleagues presented themselves. A pulpit—the first of which we know—had been erected for them, that they might be the better heard, and on this Ezra took his place in the early morning[2] of the day of the seventh new moon—famous from of old for its feast of trumpet-blowing, as specially holy,[3] and from the remotest times a season of holy assembly and cessation of work. Thirteen priests stood around him, as he unrolled from right to left a long scroll of the Law brought with him from Chaldæa. The multitude, till then sitting, in East-

[1] Neh. viii. 3.
[2] From the dawn, or "light." Neh. viii. 3.
[3] Lev. xxiii. 22-25. Num. xxix. 1-6.

ern fashion, on the ground, instantly rose at the sight of the Sacred Book, and stood reverently to hear its words. Prayer fitly opened a service so holy, the voice of Ezra first breaking the silence by "blessing Jehovah, the great God." An ancient psalm appears to have supplied the words—during the utterance of which the people joined in adoration, with uplifted hands and loud Amens, bowing their heads, and worshipping with their faces to the earth, at each pause and at the close. Ezra then read a portion of the Law, after which a body of thirteen Levites, skilled in its exposition, as disciples of the great scribe, explained its meaning[1] to the vast crowd, amidst which they were apparently stationed at various points.[2] A second portion was then read by Ezra, followed by a second explanation,[3] and thus the time passed, from sunrise till the fierce mid-day heat compelled a temporary cessation. Nothing could exceed the deep attention of the people. For at least six hours they stood with covered heads, eagerly listening to Ezra, and to the scribes who commented on the sacred text he read.[4] The excitement was intense. In past ages their fathers had neglected the holy words spoken to the nation by God, or written by His inspiration, and this had brought on them all the misery of Assyrian and Babylonian



Bowing the Head.

[1] Expanding and simplifying the words. Vitringa, *De Synag. Vet.*, p. 420.

[2] Neh. viii. 4–7.

[3] Neh. viii. 8.

[4] Vitringa says it had always been the custom to stand during the reading of the Law, but this is not stated in Scripture. *De Synag. Vet.*, p. 167.

slavery. Henceforward there should be no such terrible mistake. The Temple and its services might still be dear to them, but not more so than the knowledge and observance of the Law. The scribes became from this time the foremost body in the land. It had hitherto boasted of its Temple: it would henceforth boast also of the Torah.



Roll of a Book.

Modern history offers as the most vivid parallel to the scene, the eagerness of England or Germany for the Scriptures in the sixteenth century, when they were restored by the Reformers to their rightful place in the Church, after the neglect of centuries.

The contrast between their own practice and the requirements of the Law, as laid down by the scribes, alarmed all. It seemed as if calamities like those from which they had suffered in the past, must visit them again for their shortcomings. Far and near rose loud weeping. Confessions and lamentations filled the air. But it was no time for sorrow; that would come after. It was a day holy to Jehovah; there must be no tears to mar its joy. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levitical Rabbis, his colleagues, alike protested against any sadness. They must rather hold a festival, and eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them who had none.

The next day saw the chiefs of clans, the priests, and Levites, collected round Ezra for a further study of the

Law. The portion read included the account of the Feast of Tabernacles,[1] with its preparation of booths of twigs and branches. It was the very time for this great festival being held. They would forthwith celebrate it with all exactness. Orders were, therefore, sent through the whole country, that the people should gather from the hill-sides, branches of olives, oleasters or wild olives, and myrtles, and palms, and bring them to Jerusalem, to make the booths required. Originally commemorating the wilderness life in tents, it had become, in later times, the great harvest festival of the year, to express the national gratitude to Jehovah for His bounty in creating for man, once more, the fruits of the earth. The enthusiasm was boundless. Huts were raised everywhere; on the flat roofs, in the courts of the houses, in the Temple precincts, and in the vacant spaces before the city gates. The feast had been celebrated at the consecration of Solomon's Temple,[2] and in the first year of the Return,[3] but never so exactly, in all its legal details, or so universally, since the time of Joshua.[4]

Its successive days passed amidst high rejoicing; the mornings devoted to hearing more of the Law read by Ezra; the rest of the day to festivities. At last, after a week of gladness, it closed with a solemn assembly of the whole people, all work ceasing and solemn sacrifices being offered.[5]

The people were not, however, allowed to separate without a formal renewal of the covenant with Jehovah, so often made before by their fathers. Two days after the close of the feast,[6] a solemn fast was held; the multitude

[1] Lev. xxiii. 39–43.
[2] 2 Chron. vii. 9. 1 Kings viii. 65.
[3] Ezra iii. 4.
[4] Neh. viii. 17.
[5] Neh. viii. 18. Lev. xxiii. 36.
[6] Neh. ix. 1.

assembling, clad in sackcloth, with earth on their heads, as a sign of mourning. Once more, portions of the Law were read aloud, but only for three hours, not, as hitherto, for six. Public confession by all, of their sins and the sins of their fathers, succeeded. This ended, the scribes ascended a special platform erected for them,[1] and opened the service of the day by "crying with a loud voice to Jehovah, their God." The vast assembly was then summoned to rise from the ground and praise the Lord in a triumphal chant, led, no doubt, by the Levitical choir and musicians. One of the leaders, probably Ezra, now led the multitude in prayer, recounting the wonderful ways of God to His people in the past, their hardness of heart, His pitying mercy, their frequent apostasy and just punishment. They were slaves in the land promised to their fathers. It yielded a large revenue to the kings (of Persia) whom God had set over them for their sins. These potentates indeed, he continued, did as they pleased, not only with the produce of the soil, but with the population at large, taking them at their will to serve in their wars, and carrying off their cattle for their baggage wagons and for food, so that the land was in great distress. All this humiliation and misery was the just punishment for having forsaken Jehovah. The whole people must, therefore, once more solemnly renew their covenant to serve Him, and Him only, that He might send them prosperity.

A formal document had been prepared, binding all henceforth to fidelity to the national faith, and to this the leaders of the community forthwith appended their signatures, beginning with Nehemiah as the head of the little state. Princes, Levites, priests, and the chiefs of the

[1] Neh. ix. 4.

clans and sub-clans, as representatives of the people, followed. The whole assembly, moreover, took an oath to obey the Law of Moses—people, priests, Levites, the guard of the Temple gates, the singers, the Nethinim, and the Temple slaves. Many descendants of the Hebrews, left in Palestine at the time of the Captivity, took this opportunity to unite themselves formally with Judah, definitely separating from all such relations to the heathen population of the country, as compromised their ceremonial or legal purity.

The covenant thus adopted with a solemn oath, which was heightened by a curse on its transgression, embodied the strict views of the Law advanced by Ezra and his colleagues. No intermarriage with non-Israelites was to be tolerated. No purchases were to be made on a Sabbath or holy day, and on these seasons no goods or provisions were to be exposed for sale by the heathen traders from outside. The land was, further, to be left fallow on the seventh year, as commanded in Exodus,[1] and all debts were to be then remitted. That year, was, in fact, to limit the claims of a creditor. In Exodus[2] it had been ordained that a voluntary tax of half a shekel should be paid yearly by every Israelite over twenty, for the support of the Temple; it was now enacted that this tax should, henceforward, be carefully levied, but in consideration of the general poverty, its amount was reduced from a half to the third of a shekel.[3] The funds thus secured were to provide for the shew-bread, the meal offerings, and burnt offerings—including those on the Sabbaths, new moons, and periodical feasts—and also for thank offerings presented in the name

[1] Exod. xxiii. 11. [2] Exod. xxx. 13.
[3] Still paid in the time of Christ. Matt. xvii. 24.

of the congregation, and public trespass offerings, with other expenses of the Temple. Moreover, to secure a regular supply of wood proper for the altar, the priests, Levites, and people were assigned their respective turns in bringing it to the Temple. Similar arrangements were also made for bringing thither the first fruits of the soil and of fruit trees,[1] for presenting first-born sons [2] and the first-born of cattle, that they might be redeemed,[3] and for sending in the firstlings of sheep and goats, the fat of which was to be burnt on the altar, while the flesh went to the priests.[4] Measures were also taken for the payment of the first fruits of coarse meal [5] and heave offerings of wheat and barley [6] and of other fruits and produce, including wine and oil.[7] These were all to be brought to the priest, that they might be stored in the proper chambers in the Temple precincts, whence they were to be served out to the priests, for their support.

In the same way the tithes were to be brought in for the sustenance of the Levites on duty in Jerusalem, members of the order in country towns being cared for from the same source, by other arrangements. To secure exactness, a priest was to attend, with a Levite, when these payments were delivered, and was to see that a tenth of all tithes was handed over to the priests as a body, to supplement their other revenues. Similarly, the people and the Levites were to deliver at the Temple all heave offerings of grain, wine, and oil, to be put away in the sacred storehouses ; since the priests, Temple guards, and singers, for whose sustenance they were in a measure to serve, were employed in the holy

[1] Exod. xxiii. 19 ; xxxiv. 26. Deut. xxvi. 2.
[2] Num. xviii. 15.
[3] Exod. xiii. 12. Num. xviii. 15.
[4] Num. xviii. 17
[5] Num. xv. 20.
[6] Ezra vi. 9.
[7] Num. xviii. 12.

bounds, and the sacred vessels in which part of them was to be offered, were also kept in the Temple.

Such was the covenant now entered into by the whole community. In former times, similar transactions had exclusively referred to general fidelity to Jehovah; the minuteness with which the interests of the Temple, the priests, the Levites, and all the Temple officials, were now guarded, marked the overpowering influence and authority of Ezra, and the different spirit of the age.

These matters being settled, the way was at last clear [1] to carry out the change already projected, of transplanting part of the country population to Jerusalem, to add to its dignity, and guard it against surprise, by providing a sufficient force of men able to bear arms, for its defence. The delay had been caused by the determination that only families of pure Jewish blood should be allowed to become citizens. The prophets had continually dwelt on this as a characteristic of the holy city [2] in the good times coming, and Ezra and Nehemiah were only too eager to secure the fulfilment of such predictions. The genealogies of the whole community throughout the country required strict examination, to secure a complete list of all who were of unblemished Hebrew descent. This having been obtained after much labour, lots were cast by all the rural population, and every tenth family thus selected, was required to break up its home and remove permanently to Jerusalem. Some, however, it would seem, on whom the lot fell, were unwilling to go, but the greater number cheerfully acquiesced in the change of home demanded, their ready loyalty to the capital gaining them the plaudits of the people at large. Such of the Nethinim and the descendants of

[1] Neh. xi. [2] Joel iii. 17. Isa. xxxv. 8; lii. 1. Nah. i. 15. Zech. xiv. 21, etc.

Solomon's slaves as did not already live in Jerusalem, appear to have been transplanted from the country at the same time, to the suburb of Ophel, south of the Temple, but a great number of priests and Levites were allowed to remain in different towns, where portions of land had been assigned them.[1] Yet, amidst all these changes, signs of the national subjection remained on every hand; for Levites, singers, and people, had each an official set over them, to watch after the interests of the Persian king.[2]

It only now remained, to dedicate with fitting solemnity, the city walls—raised amidst so much opposition, with so loyal a devotion. To make the ceremony more imposing, messengers were sent through the land to bring to Jerusalem all the Levites—the ordinary ministers of the Temple—the musicians, with their cymbals, harps, and lyres, and the singers, in their three great divisions.[3] These last had to be summoned from the "circle" of the Jordan round Jericho, from Netopha, fifteen miles south of Jerusalem, from Beth Gilgal, eighteen miles, and from Geba, seven miles north of it, and from Azmaveth, a place now unknown. Open villages had been built by the different choral fraternities in these districts, which lay near enough to Jerusalem to make their periodical attendances in the Temple easy. In further preparation for the great event the Levites, now minutely strict in their rites, on their arrival in the holy city, purified not only themselves, but the people, the gates, and the walls, by sacrifices, that no ceremonial shortcoming in the least detail might lessen the sacredness of the proceedings.

On the appointed day, Nehemiah himself took the lead in the great celebration. The broad top of the walls—

[1] Neh. xi. 20. [2] Neh. xi. 24. [3] Neh. xii. 24.

built with a parapet as now—to allow fighting men to defend them in case of a siege—was fitly chosen for the scene of an impressive display. Assembling the chiefs of the priestly clans, the Levites, and the people, he marshalled them in two great divisions, which advanced in opposite directions, to meet at the open space of the Temple precincts after going round the circuit of the walls. At the head of one walked Nehemiah, at that of the other Ezra, the two leaders of the community. A great choir, giving thanks, and praising and blessing God with songs and music, followed in each procession. The chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and the laity came next—the priestly order in two selected divisions. Then followed other notable laymen of Judah and Benjamin. Behind these walked two other bodies of priests, blowing the sacred horns.[1] Then came a body of Levite singers and musicians, the latter with the instruments known as invented or introduced by David. All marched in their robes and vestments, or festive apparel, filling the air with loud rejoicings, till the two processions met at last in the open space before the Temple. There the whole participants in both, united in a chorus of praise and thanksgiving, the voices of the singers rising loud and clear above the harps and cymbals.[2] Then followed great sacrifices, offered by the priests on the huge altar before the Holy Place in the Temple, and with this the solemnities closed. The people were beside themselves for joy, their loud cries of gladness filling the air, even to the distant surrounding hills.

The Jerusalem thus reconstituted was, however, only a very small town, according to our ideas, for even the city

[1] Neh. xii. 41. [2] Neh. xii. 42.

of the present day encloses within its walls no more than about two hundred acres, while Hyde Park contains three hundred and eighty-eight, and is thus nearly twice as large. But Nehemiah's Jerusalem was much smaller than the modern Jerusalem, for it did not extend round what is now called Zion, or over the stretch along the whole north of the city, known in Jewish days as Bezetha. Yet even within these narrow limits, Nehemiah tells us, there was much unoccupied ground. "The city was large and great," he says, "but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." If, therefore, we estimate the population at ten thousand, it would be equivalent to about fifty people to the acre, including the large space of the Temple enclosure, which was uninhabited, and the space occupied by public buildings. Its growth, moreover, was very slow till the later years of Herod the Great, when a firm government and the long continuance of peace, added to the supreme attractions of the Temple, which drew innumerable pilgrims, gave it a prosperity it had never had before. Yet, even at its highest good fortune, it was, necessarily, from the natural limits of its site, a very small town.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PROPHET MALACHI.

THE great Dedication Festival of the new walls of Jerusalem is the last incident recorded of the first period of Nehemiah's governorship. After he had been twelve years absent from Persia, the wear of mind and body told on him, and a temporary furlough, during which he could return to his royal master at Ecbatana, or Shushan, and render an account of his high trust, was desirable. Everything appeared to be quiet and safe in Judah; the walls of Jerusalem were built, the city increasingly prosperous from the late addition to its population, the Temple worship established in ceremonial completeness, and the people pledged by solemn covenant to uphold it. They had even gone further. Public readings of the Law, which afterwards developed into the great institution of the synagogue, had become a fixed custom; and after one of these the people had voluntarily abjured any close relations with neighbours of heathen descent, including Ammonites and Moabites,[1] as if desirous of shewing their fidelity to all Levitical requirements. Nehemiah had no sooner left for Persia, however, than the worthlessness of these professions became only too apparent. In spite of the presence of Ezra in Jerusalem, it was seen that a reformation enforced by the civil power, rather than the fruit of individual con-

[1] Neh. xiii. 1. Deut. xxiii. 3. Num. xxii. 2.

viction, had no permanent vitality. The tithes due to the Temple, the Levites, and the priests, were not delivered, and the greatest distress was thus caused to all who depended on them for maintenance. The choristers, the guards of the gates, and the ordinary Levites, alike, were compelled to go back to their homes and cultivate their fields for a living. Public worship was thus interrupted, and the Temple, forsaken by its ministers, was neglected by the people.[1] Nor was the refusal to pay tithes the only sign of an altered spirit among the people. The Sabbath was profaned, both in town and country; wine-presses were busy in its sacred hours, and the roads and fields dotted with workers, taking sheaves to the barn on their heavily-laden asses. Jerusalem itself was disturbed by a Sabbath fair, to which loads of wine, grapes, figs, and much else were carried in during the sacred hours. Phœnician fishermen exposed for sale their catch off the coasts, and traders from Tyre displayed their countless wares. After all the professed zeal to put an end to mixed marriages, things were rapidly drifting to almost a worse condition than of old. Not a few husbands deserted their Jewish wives for Philistine, Ammonite, or Moabite women;[2] and the children of these marriages had already shewn by their broken dialect—half Philistine, half Hebrew—how soon they would cease to take pride in anything Jewish. The very priests had rapidly lost their high tone. Their irreverence, indifference, and worldliness shocked the thoughtful.[3] Moneyed men once more shewed themselves the grinding and oppressive tyrants of the poor.[4] Everything that Ezra and Nehemiah had effected was well-nigh undone.

[1] Neh. xiii. 10, 11.
[2] Mal. ii. 10-14.
[3] Mal. i. 6, 9, 10.
[4] Mal. iii. 5.

To this sad state of things we owe the appearance of the last of the prophets, known to us as Malachi, which, however, may have been his title, rather than his name. It means "my messenger," and hence the Greek Bible translates the first verse, "by the hand of His messenger," or "angel," which led some of the Fathers to think that Malachi was not a man at all, but an angel from heaven. The Rabbis, however, are less fanciful, and indulge in various opinions respecting his identity and birthplace. Thus, it is said by some, that he was born at Sopha, in Zebulon; by others, that he was Mordecai, of whom we read in Esther; and by still others, in turn, that he was Zechariah, or Haggai, this last prophet being, also, called the "messenger of Jehovah."[1] He has most commonly, however, been identified with Ezra, who, it is affirmed, came back from Babylon when he was a hundred and thirty years old, and delivered this prophecy. The seer, whoever he was, must have been a contemporary of Nehemiah, for the sins he denounces—breaking the Law by marrying alien wives, keeping back tithes and offerings, and similar offences against the Law—are the same as are denounced by the Jewish Pacha. He must, moreover, have come forward after Haggai and Zechariah, for he makes no mention of the restoration of the Temple as a work still to be completed. Nor does Ezra speak of him. The Captivity, as a thing long past, is not alluded to, and the Temple service is treated as in full operation. The name "Pehah," moreover, which is a Persian title identical with that used of Nehemiah,[2] is applied by "Malachi" to the governor of Jerusalem. The prophecy must, therefore, have been written some time after the return of Nehemiah from

[1] Hag. i. 13.

[2] Neh. xii. 26. Mal. i. 8.

Persia, in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, about the year 420 B.C.

There had been others of the sacred order, and even prophetesses, since the days of Haggai and Zechariah, but they had either opposed Ezra and Nehemiah, or failed to secure commanding influence. In Malachi, however, the ancient seers had once more a worthy representative. Clearly realizing the wants of the time, fearless in his reproof, and stern in his demands and denunciations, he was no less striking in his vivid anticipations of the coming of the Messiah. Hitherto, this Promised Deliverer had been awaited as a royal descendant of David; but Malachi announces Him as no other than Jehovah Himself, in the person of the Messenger of His Covenant.[1] The prophet seems to have stood to Ezra and Nehemiah in the same relation as that of Isaiah to Hezekiah, or Haggai to Zerubbabel, and shewed himself a powerful ally. In his words we hear for the last time the tone of the ancient seers.

His brief prophecy opens with a tender allusion to the love shewn towards Judah, in the past, by Jehovah, as proved especially by the different treatment extended to it and to Edom, though Jacob and Esau, as twin brothers, might have expected equal favour to be shewn their descendants. Yet Judah had been unfaithful to its Heavenly Father! What ingratitude could be so terrible!

"1. 2. 'I have loved you,'[2] says Jehovah. Yet ye say, 'In what hast Thou loved us?'"

Jehovah answers:

"Is not Esau a brother of Jacob? says Jehovah. Yet I loved Jacob 3. and hated Esau, and laid his mountains waste, and made his inher-

[1] Mal. iii. 1-5. [2] Mal. i. 2, 3.

itance a dwelling of jackals of the desert.[1] 4. Though Edom say, [2] 'We are broken in pieces, but we will build up our ruins again,' thus says Jehovah: They may build, but I will throw down, and these desolate regions will be called 'The Lands of Wickedness,' and men will say of their inhabitants—'The people against whom Jehovah is indignant for ever.'[3] 5. Your eyes will see this, and you will say, 'Jehovah is great (in His doings) beyond the limits of Israel.'"

Having thus established the claim of Jehovah to the love and obedience of His people, the prophet advances to his charge against them, beginning with the sins of the priesthood.

"6. A son honours his father and a servant his master. But if I be a Father, where is My honour? If I be a Master, where is the reverence due to Me? says Jehovah of Hosts, to you, O priests, who dishonour My name, and yet say, 'How have we dishonoured Thy name?' 7. (Let me tell you.) You offer unclean bread on My altar,[4] and yet say, 'In what have we defiled Thy name?' (You do it thus), by your saying (in your deeds, that) the table of Jehovah—His altar—is not worth respect. 8. When you offer blind animals for sacrifices, is that no offence? When you offer lame or sick creatures, is that no grievance?[5] If you offered it to your governor (though he be only a man), would he be pleased with you, or regard your person (with favour)? says Jehovah of Hosts. 9. But now, when you implore God to be gracious unto us—His people—you, at whose hand He has received such an insult—will He regard your persons with favour? says Jehovah of Hosts.

"10. (How can He?) For I would, says He, there were one among you who would close the Temple doors altogether, that ye may not kindle fire on My altar, since your conduct makes it useless to do so. I have no pleasure in you, says Jehovah of Hosts, and I will not accept any offering at your hand!"

God does not need their worship; He will hereafter be

[1] The desolation of Edom referred to seems to have happened shortly before the prophet speaks. Idumæa, as well as Judah, had been subdued by Babylon.

[2] **Mal. i. 4-10.**

[3] Edom never regained its former glory. From the times of the Maccabees, especially, it sank, and its land became forsaken.

[4] By "bread," the prophet means offerings generally. See next verse. All offerings are called "bread of God." Lev. xxi. 6, 8, 17, etc.

[5] It was contrary to Lev. xxii. 20-22. "Governor," Hebrew Bible, "Pacha."

honoured over the whole world, by the heathen, whom they despise.

"11. For, from the rising of the sun to its going down,[1] My name will be great among the heathen, and in every place incense will be offered to My name, and a pure offering (not an impure, like yours); for My name shall be great among the heathen, says Jehovah of Hosts. 12. But ye have profaned it by your saying, 'The table of Jehovah is defiled, and what is given to lay on it—the bread of God—is contemptible.' 13. Ye have said also, 'Ah, what a trouble it is!' And ye have sniffed at it, says Jehovah of Hosts, and bring what has been taken by force, and the lame, and the sick, (as offerings). Such is the kind of sacrifice ye have brought! Shall I accept this at your hand? says Jehovah of Hosts.

"14. But cursed be he who tries to deceive Me (in this way); who, having in his flock a male, and having vowed to offer a sacrifice, offers to Jehovah a blemished beast. For I am a great King, says Jehovah of Hosts, and My name is feared among the nations."

Having thus fearlessly accused the priests, Malachi passes on to announce the punishment that will befall them, in case they do not take warning, and discharge their office aright.

"II. 1. And now, this commandment is for you, O priests. 2. If ye will not hear and lay it to heart, to give glory to My name, says Jehovah of Hosts, I will send on you the curse, and curse your blessings, and, indeed, I have already cursed them, because ye do not lay it to heart.[2]

"3. Behold, I will drive the sower away from the field,[3] and I will spread filth[4] on your faces—the filth of your feasts—(dishonouring you to the uttermost) and it will stick to you.[5] 4. And ye will know that I have sent this command to you (to honour My service, as the condition of the continuance of) My covenant with Levi, says Jehovah of Hosts.

[1] **Mal. i. 11-14; ii. 1-4.**

[2] "Your blessings," the tithes, etc., which were the revenues of the priests, but were already withheld by the people.

[3] Conjectural reading of Hitzig and Steiner. They depended on the farmer for their tithes. [4] Literally, "dung." [5] Vulgate and Luther.

"5. My covenant with him was one of life and peace,[1] and I gave it him to secure His fearing Me, and he did fear Me, and tremble before My name. 6. The law of truth was in his mouth, and no unjust (no partial) decision was found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many back from transgression. 7. For the lips of the priest should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of Jehovah of Hosts.

"8. But ye have departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble in regard to the law; ye have corrupted the covenant which I made with Levi, says Jehovah of Hosts. 9. Therefore I will also make you contemptible and despised before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, and have had respect of persons in (your carrying out) the law."

From his accusation of the priests, the prophet passes to the sin of those who had married heathen wives, divorcing Jewesses to do so, in spite of the recent legislation on the subject, and in the face of ancient prohibition.

"10. Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless one to the other, profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11. Judah has acted faithlessly, and abomination is committed in Israel and Jerusalem; for Judah has dishonoured his race—the holy people of Jehovah, whom He loved—and has married the daughter of a foreign god. 12. May Jehovah cut off the (race of the) man that doeth this, both the watchman and him that answers,[2] from the tents of Jacob, and cut off him also who might present an offering to Jehovah of Hosts (on his behalf, for the atonement of his sins)!

"13. Still further, ye have committed a second offence; ye cover the altar of Jehovah with tears,[3] with weeping, and sighs, so that Jehovah no longer turns towards your offering or receives that which is acceptable, at your hand. 14. And ye say, why? Because Jehovah has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, towards whom thou hast acted faithlessly, though she was thy companion, (sharing joy and sorrow with thee), and the wife of thy marriage bond.[4] 15. No one who has any understanding has done this.[5] But ye say, 'What was it that "the one" (Abraham) did—(he who is the greatest

[1] **Mal. ii. 5–15.**
[2] A proverbial expression for every one.
[3] Those of divorced Jewish wives.
[4] This refers to the heartless divorces in use.
[5] This and what follows seems the best reading.

name in our history)? (Why did he send away Hagar, his wife, the mother of Ishmael?' The answer is), he was seeking a Godly seed—(the child of promise); therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let no one act faithlessly (against the wife of his youth)."

Having thus rebuked the leading sins of his day, the prophet turns to the future. Restlessness and murmuring abounded. Men affected to believe that the wicked were favoured by God, and prospered, while the good were allowed to suffer, and they flouted the idea of the coming of a day of judgment—the great day of the Lord—so constantly announced by the prophets, age after age. They are addressed thus:

"17. Ye weary Jehovah[1] with your words. Yet you say, 'How have we wearied Him?' (You have done it thus); by your saying, 'Every one that does evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and He delights in him,' or 'Where is the God of judgment?'"

In stern answer to these murmurers, Jehovah announces His coming to judgment.

"III. 1. Behold, I send My Messenger,[2] to prepare the way before Me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye desire, says Jehovah of Hosts."

The "day of the Lord" in Malachi, however, unlike that of Joel and the earlier prophets, is not the advent of Jehovah as the warrior of Israel, to destroy the heathen, but that of One who should purify the kingdom of God from iniquity, and introduce the triumph of righteousness.

[1] Mal. ii. 17; iii. 1.

[2] "My messenger" is in Hebrew "Malachi." This has led some to question whether the phrase be a title applied to the prophet, or a proper name. Keil understands "My messenger," in the first line of the verse, of John the Baptist. "Angels" or "Messengers" had often appeared on missions from God, but in Malachi the figure pervades the whole book.

"2. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire [1] and like fuller's [2] lye. 3. And He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He will purify and cleanse the sons of Levi, as gold and silver (are purged from alloy by the smelter), that they may (henceforth) offer to Jehovah His offering, in righteousness. 4. Then will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to Jehovah, as in former days and long past years."

Thus the priests and Levites will first be judged, but then comes the visitation of all evil doers.

"5. And I will come near you to judgment, and will be a swift witness against the sorcerers (who deal in magic spells and superstitions), and against adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those who oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and turn aside the alien from his right, and fear not Me, says Jehovah of Hosts. 6. For I, Jehovah, change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.[3]

"7. Since the days of your fathers ye have gone away from My ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, says Jehovah of Hosts. But ye say, 'In what respect shall we return?'

"8. Should a man defraud God? Yet, ye have defrauded me. But ye say, 'In what respect have we defrauded Thee?' In tithes and heave offerings (for the support of My House). 9. Ye are cursed with the curse,[4] yet ye are (continually) defrauding Me—the whole of you. 10. Bring all the tithes into the (Temple) storehouse, that there may be food in My House, and put me to the proof by this, says Jehovah of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing (in copious rains), even to superabundance. 11. And I will rebuke the devourer—(the locust)—for your sakes, so that he will no longer destroy the fruits of your ground, and the vine will no longer fail in the field, says Jehovah of Hosts. 12. And all nations will call you happy, for ye shall be a delightsome land, says Jehovah of Hosts.

"13. Your words have been stout against Me, says Jehovah. Yet

[1] The furnace of a metal smelter. **Mal. iii. 2-13.** [2] Or, washerman's.

[3] Steiner and Keil understand this verse thus: "For I, Jehovah, change not, and ye sons of Jacob shall not perish, as a race." I shall punish only the wicked among you.

[4] Unfruitfulness, bad harvests, drought, and locusts, etc.

ye say, 'What have we spoken together against Thee?' 14. Ye have said,[1] 'It is of no use serving God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and have gone about in (black) mourning (weeds) before Jehovah of Hosts, (in fasts)? This being so, we praise the proud, ungodly, (prosperous, man), as happy, for not only are the workers of wickedness built up, but when they have thus put God to proof, they are nevertheless delivered (from evil).'"

These foolish and wicked speeches, the prophet contrasts with the bearing of the godly among the people, announcing, besides, the blessing vouchsafed to these faithful ones, and warning the impenitent of the certainty of their future doom.

"16. Then they that feared Jehovah discoursed often one with another, and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for those who feared Jehovah and honoured His name. 17. And they shall be My treasure, says Jehovah, in The Day which I am preparing; and I will spare them (in that day) as a man spares his son that serves him. 18. Then shall ye, once more, see the difference between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serves God and him that serves Him not.

"IV. 1. For, behold, The Day comes, burning like an oven, and all the proud, and every worker of iniquity, shall be as the stubble (that feeds it); The Day that is coming will burn them up, says Jehovah of Hosts, so (utterly) that it will leave neither root nor twig of them.

"2. But to you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness will arise, with healing in His beams,[2] and ye shall go forth (from the places in which you have hidden in that awful day), and leap like fed calves (for joy). 3. And ye will tread the wicked under foot, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet (burnt up as they will be), in The Day which I am preparing, says Jehovah of Hosts."

A final exhortation to the godly concludes the prophecy.

"4. Be mindful of the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded in Horeb to all Israel, even (My) statutes and judgments! 5. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet[3] before the coming of the

[1] **Mal. iii. 14–18; iv. 1–5.** [2] Hebrew, "wings."
[3] Luke i. 16, 17. Matt. xi. 10. Luke vii. 27. Matt. xvii. 11. Mark ix. 11.

great and dreadful Day of Jehovah ; 6. and he will turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction." [1]

The stern preaching of Malachi was vindicated by the condition of things which Nehemiah found on his return from Persia. Friendly relations with the open enemies of strict Judaism had been shewn even by the high priest Eliashib, who was either related to Tobiah the Ammonite, by marriage, or connected with the party friendly to him in high Jewish society. In open disrespect to both Ezra and Nehemiah, Eliashib had gone so far, during the governor's absence, as to make over to Tobiah one of the houses in the outer Temple buildings, appropriating to his use, among others, the great chamber in which the flour and frankincense for the altar, the vessels for measuring the quantities required, and the tithes of corn, wine, and oil, for the Levites, the guards of the doors, and the singers, were stored.[2] Such an abuse at once roused the indignation of Nehemiah. That the high priest, of all men, should have lodged Tobiah in Jerusalem, especially in the courts of the House of God, was an outrage not to be endured for a moment. The furniture of the intruder was at once unceremoniously thrown out into the road ; the chambers he had occupied cleansed as if from surpassing defilement, and the vessels and stores, removed for his convenience, carried back to their former places.

This irregularity, however, was only one symptom of the widely spread moral declension, denounced so strenuously by Malachi. The non-payment of the tithes, in

[1] Literally, "a ban" which devoted anything to utter destruction. Mal. iv. 6.
[2] Neh. xiii. 5.

particular, shocked Nehemiah. Summoning the chief men of the community, therefore, to his presence, he bitterly reproached them with their failure to collect the dues for the Temple and Priests. "Why," asked he, "is the House of God forsaken?" It was a serious matter. The Temple services had been suspended for want of Levites to discharge the sacred offices, and its courts were left empty of worshippers.[1] Such carelessness could not be suffered. The elders of the various localities must at once attend to their duty. Such rigour brought the happiest results. The tithes were forthwith collected, for a time, from the whole land.

The strict observance of the Sabbath, to which the people had pledged themselves in their recent covenant, had been as shamefully violated as the engagement respecting tithes. As already noticed, the wine-presses were everywhere as busy on the seventh day as on the rest of the week: harvest work was continued during its sacred hours, and the sheaves, laden on asses, carried, all day long, to the threshing floors, as at other times. Even in Jerusalem, the Sabbath was noisy with market people bringing wine, grapes, figs, and other produce, to the gates through the Friday night, and selling them on the Saturday.[2]

Phœnician fishermen and dealers in dried fish and in every kind of Tyrian ware, attended the fair weekly, in numbers. The day on which all work should have ceased, was the least quiet of any. Such desecration could not be suffered. Calling before him the municipal authorities, Nehemiah rebuked them sharply, reminding them that similar conduct on the part of their fathers had, in part,

[1] Neh. xiii. 11.

[2] Neh. xiii. 18. The Sabbath began on our Friday at sunset, and lasted till our Saturday at sunset.

been the cause of their national calamities.[1] Henceforward, by his command, the gates of the city were to be shut on Friday night, as soon as their archways grew dark, and they were not to be opened till sunset on Saturday, when the Jewish Sabbath was over. Men were also placed at each gate, to see that no burdens were smuggled in during the day of rest. Balked in their hopes of finding a mart inside the city, the market people and traders tried to open one outside the walls; free egress being allowed the inhabitants during the Sabbath, though traffic was prohibited. But this lasted only a short time. A threat to arrest the offenders was sufficient to secure temporarily the honour of the holy day. Against any recurrence of such disorder, Levites, ceremonially purified for the purpose, were appointed to attend at each gate during the Sabbath, and keep a strict watch over those who went out or in.[2]

The question of mixed marriages, in spite of all efforts on the part of Ezra and Nehemiah, and of all promises on that of the people, still gave great trouble. Not a few, as we have seen in the denunciation by Malachi, broke the law in this matter, to the extent of divorcing Jewesses to marry heathen women, or at least proselytes. Nehemiah noticed this very soon. Such indifference in a matter which he, like Ezra, regarded as vital, roused his indignation. Pacha though he was, he could not restrain himself when some who had thus offended were brought before him. From fierce words he passed to violence, rushing at the offenders, striking them, and tearing their hair and beards in his burning anger. Nor would he rest till they had sworn by Jehovah, to abandon their sin.[3] One transgressor, indeed, Manasseh, the grandson of the high priest

[1] Jer. xvii. 21. [2] Neh. xiii. 22. [3] Neh. xiii. 25.

Eliashib, who had ventured to marry the daughter of Sanballat, the bitterest enemy of Jerusalem in its past trials, did not escape so easily. Refusing to put away his wife, Nehemiah's indignation knew no bounds. A priest was bound to marry only a virgin of his own race,[1] and thus the priesthood was defiled by this alliance. Besides, the guilty man was a younger son of the high-priestly family, so that the whole order was compromised. The offence was, in fact, a breach at once of the covenant granted to Phinehas, and of that made directly with the tribe of Levi.[2] Nehemiah, therefore, ignominiously expelled him from the priesthood, chasing him from his presence with a fierce imprecation on one who, with his family, "had defiled at once the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites."[3]

The closing verses of Nehemiah's notices of affairs in Judah, under his rule, give a brief summary of the results of his government, apart from the great work of building the walls of Jerusalem. He had purified the community from heathen customs, and had restored an orderly administration of public worship. He had further arranged for the regular provision of wood for the altar, and for the tithes and first fruits being paid in for the service of the Temple and its ministers. The legal spirit of later Judaism shines out in such a record, set down with minute exactness, as a ground on which it could be pleaded that God should remember one for good. Malachi, in the same way, had denounced marriage with foreigners, but his preaching had been mainly directed against the moral evils of the times. The exact observance of Levitical rules was,

[1] Lev. xxi. 7-14. [2] Num. xxv. 13. Exod. xxviii. 1. Lev. xxi. 6-8.

[3] Neh. xiii. 29. The civil power in this case, as in so many others in Jewish history, is supreme over the ecclesiastical.

however, the prominent characteristic of the reforms of both Nehemiah and Ezra. The contrast marks the formalism of the age after the Exile; so different from the spirit of earlier days.

Of Nehemiah's later history we know nothing, but he and Ezra fill a large part in Jewish legends and traditions. To the generations immediately succeeding, Nehemiah seemed the greater man of the two, for it is he, and not Ezra, whom we meet in the list of heroes of the nation given by the son of Sirach.[1] In the age of the Maccabees it was to Nehemiah, not to Zerubbabel, that the glory was ascribed of rebuilding the Temple, setting up again the altar, offering the first sacrifice on it, and discovering the sacred fire, which the priests, it was believed, had hidden in a dry cistern.[2] To him, also, was attributed the collection of the sacred books, and the formation of the Canon.[3] But in later times Ezra took the chief place in the national memory. Some, as I have said, hold him to have been the prophet known to us as Malachi. He had reproduced the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, it was said, from memory, after the Chaldæans had destroyed them. Apocryphal books were written in his name, and he was glorified as the founder of the Great Synagogue of tradition, to which the elaboration of the Law was mainly ascribed.

The whole subsequent history of Judaism is the monument of the zeal and devotion of the two Reformers. To their stern exclusiveness was directly due the hatred and rivalry between Jew and Samaritan, the creation of the Rabbinical Law, which has buried the teachings of Moses under its endless comments, and the rise of that fierce pride and Pharisaic religionism, which culminated in the

[1] Eccles. xlix. 11-13. [2] 2 Macc. i. 18, 19. [3] 2 Macc. ii. 13.

spiritual death of the nation, and in the establishment of a ritualism which controls the Jew in every act, from the cradle to the grave. Their stern Puritanism, too earnestly fixed on the letter, ended by making it supreme. They preserved the nation, and kept it true to Jehovah, but introduced a principle which, in the end, changed His worship, in the nation at large, from that of the heart and life, to a slavery to mere outward forms. As always happens, in achieving the triumph of ceremonialism, they laid the axe at the root of spiritual religion.

FINIS.

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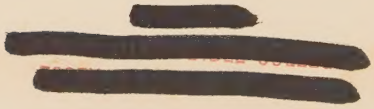
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